



April 2023

Art project for the new integrated Institute of Psychiatry of the Cliniques universitaires Saint-Luc (UCLouvain)

Malel's *Tree of Life*... in progress; Installation planned for 30.11.23 at the opening of the new site that will house the Integrated Institute of Psychiatry of the Cliniques universitaires Saint-Luc (UCLouvain)

The painter Malel is currently creating a Tree of Life for the gardens around the new Integrated Psychiatry Institute of the Cliniques universitaires Saint-Luc (UCLouvain). With meditative abstractions, this painted glass sculpture demonstrates how art can contribute to health and the healing process. The focus on art as an integral part of health care has become an established concept in the philosophy of UCL.

The work will be completed by the end of November. The artistic preparations in close cooperation with the architects and urban/landscape planners of UCL and the artist Malel are in full swing. The financing of the artwork will begin as soon as the exhibition opens, through crowdfunding. This participatory campaign was initiated by the church and the Abbaye de la Cambre in Ixelles, in collaboration with visitors to the UCL university clinics.

A multi-community project that shows that these partners are convinced that art and culture can be beneficial to our health. Not as a medicine, but as a mental link between people, nature and society. The Malel Tree of Life is clearly a work of art that accompanies healing and offers new connections with life. This is why so many people have already responded positively to the spontaneous appeal of the exhibition organizers at the Abbaye de la Cambre to help finance this unique work.

People who wish to contribute to health through art and culture can make a donation to support the creation of the Tree of Life, the production costs of which amount to 50,000 euros, via the crowdfunding platform hosted on the King Baudouin Foundation's website: <https://donate.kbs-frb.be/actions/FFO-CambreArbredevie> (tax deductible at 45% from 40 euros).

How was this *Tree of Life* project for UCL initiated?

A major retrospective of Malel's work is currently being prepared in the church and cloister of the Abbaye de la Cambre in Ixelles. It will be free for all from 14 April to 23 July 2023. The exhibition will include oil paintings, tapestries, pastels, watercolors and drawings. The key work of the exhibition is the huge canvas *'La Rencontre'*, painted in 2000 for the Church of the Trinity in Paris and subsequently shown in several churches. In the Church of Notre Dame de la Cambre in Ixelles it will be exhibited at the heart of the central nave and will give its title to an exhibition of the artist's work that will also be shown in the cloister. Malel evokes the themes of rivers, lakes, the sun, the path of life, the couple, children, portraits and of course trees, the most important symbol of the convalescents' aspiration to Life.



Malel's *Tree of Life* in a unique and specific setting

The work is set in the Natura 2000 listed landscape at the entrance to the 18,000 m² building that will house the new integrated Institute of Psychiatry, where the valley, the river... are subtly present. It is a transitional work between architecture and nature. The place becomes a refuge

or a meeting place for patients and visitors during their stay in the hospital.

The artist creates an impressive glass sculpture: a beautiful, colorful, leafy tree 4 meters high. He fills it like a tree of life. Thus it becomes rich in meaning and can be completed freely by the visitor. You can interpret it as a family tree, a tree that refers to evolution, a mythological tree of life that connects heaven, earth and the underworld or whatever you dream of... Malel's inspiration comes from his many dialogues with medical staff. Its interpretation will remain open and will depend on the references of the viewer. The relationship between the symbols on the tree and the many visitors and passers-by is open to the viewer's imagination. In any case, it offers them a calm, safe place and a point of contact with the full life.

About Malel



Born in Paris in 1958, Malel discovered his artistic path early on and worked for five years in Mac Avoy's studio to learn classical drawing. In the early 1980s, he begins working alone in his studio to produce portraits and landscapes. In the Montparnasse workshop of the city of Paris, he learns etching and aquatint. With his

engraving *Le catalpa* he wins the 1st prize of the city of Paris in 1986. A first exhibition of paintings and pastels takes place in Monaco during the summer of 1987. Then, in 1988, a new exhibition takes place in Paris at the Hôtel de Nesmond where he presents numerous portraits of men and women, artists, politicians and forest landscapes in black stone. This exhibition attracts several thousand visitors.

With the Hermet-Lorin workshop in Chartres, he creates a stained-glass window entitled *Ad amorem* for the chapel of the Jesuit novitiate in Lyon, in the Arbalétière. In 1994, the poet Pierre Gibert asks him to illustrate the poetry collection *Terre sainte* for which he produces about fifty black stone drawings. In 2000-2003, two tapestries measuring 2.50 m by 2.50 m on the themes of a *Tribute to the murdered monks of Tibhirine* and the *Blessed Sacrament* are produced with the tapestry workshop L'Atelier 3 Les Lissiers in Paris. This is the start of a close collaboration with the weavers that results in some 24 sumptuous tapestries exhibited successively at the Didier Aaron Gallery and the Bansard Gallery in Paris.

The creation of stained glass windows begins in 2008 when he meets the master glass artist Pierre-Alain Parot whose workshop is located in Aiserey, near Dijon. A first stained glass window is made for a chapel in Hauteville-sur-mer. In 2009, ten stained glass windows are commissioned for the complete renovation of the church in Vasouy (Seine Maritime) on the theme of joy in creation and the joy of Christ. In 2011, six new windows are installed in the church of Montgaudry (Orne) on the theme of the sacraments.

This technical mastery enabled the artist to take on a new challenge, that of creating large-scale outdoor stained-glass sculptures. Accompanied by the craftsmen of a German firm, he develops a complex technique that makes the painted glass resistant to all kinds of weather. Malel now thrives on the development of these outdoor sculptural works where he combines technique and mastery with the great joy of painting for a community. Knowing that the presence of his work will have a special meaning, he attaches great importance to exchanges and collaboration with his clients. Several trees have already been installed in France and Italy... Today, he plans to install one at UCL.

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