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Trees of Light In Paris

Feb 28, 2012 11:19 AM, By Ellen Lampert-Gréaux



One of the most famous avenues in the world, The [Champs-Élysées in Paris](#)

[\(http://www.champselysees-paris.com/\)](http://www.champselysees-paris.com/) had extra sparkle for the holidays. From late November 2011 until early January 2012, “Tree Rings” or kinetic circles of LEDs, added movement and color to the organic forms of 200 trees along a 1.5-mile stretch of the boulevard. Principal designer Koert Vermeulen and artistic director Marcos Viñals Bassols of [ACT Lighting Design \(http://www.actlightingdesign.com/\)](http://www.actlightingdesign.com/) in Brussels created “Tree Rings,” which was selected from 27 entries by the Comité Champs-Élysées to create new holiday decorations with a modern flair.

In daylight hours, the inner lights of each ring emitted a soft glow of light, and mirror garlands sparkled as they moved freely in the breeze. At dusk, vibrant programmed displays began, using both the inner and outer lights, continuing until 2am. “The entire scheme is programmable to create vastly different effects; precise shifts in color and tempo can be created to focus on one tree or to create a sequence or group effect, with over 80,000,000 possible combinations of effects per tree,” says Vermeulen, noting that the project is now in a warehouse but will return every year through 2014.

Each ring is an aluminum square pipe, curved and made in two pieces to make one complete circle. The base is a concrete doughnut also in two parts to go around each tree trunk, with three curved pipes, like twigs, running vertically, with the top circle touching all three twigs. The bottom two rings touch one twig and then the ring above it, for stability yet to not weigh down the trees with cables and lights. The rings were custom made by BIS Lighting with medium-power generic RGB LEDs, while [ASP Blue Square \(http://www.aspgroup.be/\)](http://www.aspgroup.be/) served as the production company. An [MA Lighting \(http://www.malighting.com/\)](http://www.malighting.com/) grandMA2 console was used for programming.

“We wanted to break with the past and avoid clichés of holiday lights,” adds Vermeulen. “We initially didn’t touch the trees, just encircled them, but eventually attached the installation to the central trunk to make it sturdier, considering winds and potential vandalism.”

“Tree Rings” is also ecological. “Our utopia was a zero-emission project,” Vermeulen explains. “This was not possible, but the power came from a photovoltaic field in the Pyrénées and was uploaded to the EDF [French electric company] for free, as a compensation project.” This makes it as ecologically friendly as possible as 200 trees are turned into contemporary light sculptures.

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