

ART – EVENT

Marie-Jo Lafontaine: a perfect rebound!
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Published online 07/06/2006

Launch of the Football World Cup in Frankfurt: a Belgian artist scores the golden goal. Visual installation on the city's towers and a red card to the world as it is. The football crowd felt involved, shaken, challenged — and won over.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT IN FRANKFURT

Marie-Jo Lafontaine never does anything halfway. Never. She refines her work with the calm assurance of a fighter who knows nothing is gained without effort and faith in one's actions. Artist and craftswoman to the very end of her labor. Success is earned, and so is lasting relevance. It's through her determination that she commands such respect in Germany — a country that knows the value of a challenge and has already opened the doors of many of its museums to her.

This time, however, the challenge was entirely different. The only artist chosen for the early launch of a global sporting event that would engage the masses for three weeks, selected among less fortunate peers to provide an artistic counterpart to a very "people-focused" video montage highlighting soccer's great moments, the Belgian creator again came out on top — and made an impression. Facing a massive crowd gathered on the banks of the Main and the two bridges framing the city's towers of finance and insurance — the *Sky Arena* — she waited patiently for her moment. In the lineup of visual artists depicting the myths, dramas, and penalty shots of football, Lafontaine took on the final act — the cherry on top — that would elevate the misfires of this unusual night festival.

"I love the World"

It was close to midnight. Far from the expected frenzy of human clusters eager for their heroes' sporting exploits, the video montage meant to stir the hearts of German supporters drew only a few scattered rounds of applause. The music was deafening, the storyline disjointed, and the stars poorly served: something essential was missing in a performance that, backed by new technologies, should have equaled the burning memories of unforgettable goals. Pelé, Platini, Di Stefano, Puskás, Maradona, Beckenbauer and many more — barely seen in a montage lacking coherence or depth. A yellow card for the referee of this dull match!

Then Marie-Jo Lafontaine took the stage.

And with her came another kind of music — subtle, original — underscoring striking images. Signed by Michael Fahres, the composition enhanced a text by Nicolas Deckmyn, its contrasting tones reflected instantly on the surrounding towers. Convinced she had to reveal the hidden side of global reality, Lafontaine produced a fifteen-minute photographic scenario.

Honest and relentless

A moving panoramic view, rhythmic and alive, of our lives encircled by barbed wire of every kind. A simple yet sharp sequence, vivid and cutting, without redundancy, manipulation, or theatrical tricks. No double-speak. All in sound, all in image.

With the steadfast help of Martial Thomas and Marina Cox, she perfected an honest, implacable gaze that, through onomatopoeia and visual clues, said a great deal — in few words and few photos —

about our daily truth. Images and crossfades, blue skies and foreheads tinted red, flashes of yellow, green, and black. Frontal faces of children and teenagers meet, at oblique angles, the great powers of money and politics, United Nations voices, media distortions, and financial drift — not to mention the automation that binds us hand and foot.

Animal masks of lies at every level. Masks of monkey, rabbit, cat... Who's fooling whom? "Give me some Air," "Time is moving," "Smile"... For whom, and for what? When, as the artist tells the world: "Turn around and see who is lying to you."

Clearly won over, the football crowd watched, felt genuinely concerned, shaken, confronted. They applauded, convinced. Marie-Jo Lafontaine had indeed succeeded in showing the world what it is, what it no longer is, and what it could be.

On June 3, 4, and 5 in Frankfurt, she earned — fairly and without doping — another brilliant victory.

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