



## *The Faux de Verzy*

*Black & white photography by Pascal Stritt*

*June 11-September 26, 2010*

*Augusta Canal Interpretive Center*

### ***About the Trees***

The forests of France's Reims Mountain contain trees unique in all the world. Known as the Faux de Verzy, these variant beech trees assume remarkable, almost mythical shapes. Their twisted, curling branches, umbrella-shaped tops, curving zigzag limbs, bulges and welds, give each specimen a unique personality.

The Faux de Verzy are exceptional examples of European natural heritage. The forest, located in the Reims Mountain Regional Natural Park (Parc Naturel Regional de la Montagne de Reims) is the main location in the world of Faux (*Fagus sylvatica tortuosa* var). Their reproduction occurs mainly by

“vegetative layering.” The uncertain origin of these trees, for which there are references from the seventeenth century, fueled many folk beliefs over time.

### ***About the Park***

For over thirty years, the Reims Mountain Regional Natural Park, in partnership with the National Forest Organization of France, has provided for the preservation and recovery of the Faux. An interpretive path constructed in 2004 leads visitors to discover or rediscover the trees in their natural forest environment, while at the same time protecting them.

The Park is located in the Champagne district of northeastern France, approximately 150 miles east of Paris, near the towns of Reims, Epernay and Chalons-en-Champagne. About 350,000 people live in the area. The park was established in 1970 to combat deforestation and environmental pressures of overuse by agriculture and leisure visitation. The Park is now considered a "green zone" protected area.

### ***About the Photographs***

Photographer Pascal Stritt selected the black and white format to depict these exceptional trees. “It highlights these special forms so singularly because the result is very different from a color photo,” Mr. Stritt explained. “It reinforces the transposition of sensations, to reveal the magic of these exceptional trees. The choice of the large, square format is from the same concern about leaving the trees and their extravagance out of any tension in the image and deprived of any artificial effect. This series of photographs highlights both the fragility of the forests and the amazing diversity of life forms that it deploys.”

This exhibition was displayed in Brazil (in 2003), in different towns in France, at the Park Naturel Regional headquarters, the Maison du Parc.

### ***About the Partnership with Augusta Canal National Heritage Area***

A partnership agreement was established between Reims Mountain Park and Augusta Canal National Heritage Area in 2007. As a pilot project between the Alliance of National Heritage Areas and the French Federation of Regional Parks, the partnership creates opportunities for cultural exchange and sharing best practices in park management, heritage development and environmental conservation. This exhibition is one result of that partnership. The Augusta Canal NHA is grateful to our partner park for sharing this exceptional photographic exhibition.