

THE FONDATION CARTIER POUR L'ART CONTEMPORAIN

BY

JEAN NOUVEL

AT FONDAZIONE GIORGIO CINI



La Biennale di Venezia

19. Mostra
Internazionale
di Architettura
Eventi Collaterali

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EXHIBITION

MAY 10 – SEPTEMBER 14, 2025
FONDAZIONE GIORGIO CINI, VENICE

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pour l'art contemporain

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THE FONDATION CARTIER POUR L'ART CONTEMPORAIN

BY JEAN NOUVEL

AT FONDAZIONE GIORGIO CINI

The Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain is pleased to present the exhibition *The Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain by Jean Nouvel* from May 10 to September 14, 2025, on the occasion of the 19th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia. As part of the Collateral Events of the Biennale Architettura 2025, this groundbreaking exhibition, hosted at the Fondazione Giorgio Cini, unveils the innovative design concepts imagined by Jean Nouvel for the Fondation Cartier's future spaces.

Since its creation in 1984 the Fondation Cartier has placed architecture at the heart of its programming, positioning it as a catalyst for interdisciplinary dialogue. Its historic building designed by Jean Nouvel and inaugurated in 1994 on Boulevard Raspail, Paris, redefined exhibition-making with its striking glass and steel structure, challenging conventions with its apparent immateriality.

Thirty years later, the Fondation Cartier has once again commissioned Jean Nouvel, this time to transform a mid-19th century Haussmannian building at 2 Place du Palais-Royal, Paris, next to the Louvre—set to open in October 2025. Pushing the boundaries of architectural design, this project embodies the Fondation's mission to engage with all forms of contemporary creation.

In Venice, visitors will encounter the premises of the new architecture of the Fondation Cartier. A large-scale sectional model of the new spaces reveals the potential of an architecture that is a dynamic exhibition-making tool. Five platforms which can be adjusted to different heights offer the possibility of creating multiple combinations of volumes, voids, and spaces, offering unprecedented imaginative opportunities for multi-disciplinary programming. The sensation and experience of the interior architectural landscape of the Fondation Cartier's new address are evoked within the exhibition space through a display of projections, fullscale photographs, architectural plans, and prototypes. The scenography highlights key design elements, including the retractable ceilings that temper natural light, as well as the mechanical guard rails that expand or restrict perspectives on the surrounding urban landscape.

The possibility of perpetual transformation, expressed through the mobility of the exhibition spaces, reflects architecture's ability to engage with the full spectrum of human creativity, spanning visual arts, performance, technology, science, and philosophy.

The Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain by Jean Nouvel stages the architect's desire to create spaces that are not merely buildings but cultural environments in and of themselves, responding to what is already present at a given site. In Venice, the exhibition unfolds against the backdrop of the museum-city. Through the Fondazione Giorgio Cini's windows, visitors glimpse the cityscape beyond San Giorgio Maggiore, across from the Grand Canal. The superimposition of the exhibition within the Venetian vista mirrors the context of the new Fondation Cartier, a building project at the heart of historical Paris. Further, the presentation of a small glass engraving of the Fondation Cartier's current, iconic building on Boulevard Raspail, along with a video showcasing Jean Nouvel's past museographic projects highlights the contextualist approach.

With its presence and participation as a Collateral Event at the Biennale Architettura 2025, the Fondation Cartier presents a compelling vision of architecture as a discipline that synthesizes the arts—coexisting in a dynamic, ever-evolving relationship through exhibition-making.



The building that will house the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain from October 2025, Place du Palais-Royal, Paris. Interior architecture by Jean Nouvel. Photo © Luc Boegly

FILMS PRESENTED IN THE EXHIBITION

Jean Nouvel and the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain

Jean Nouvel has maintained a steady collaboration with the Fondation Cartier, resulting in a number of projects, both completed and drafted, that reflect the major principles of his architecture. His theoretical and architectural reflections on the city and its context, as well as on the museum and its museographic setting developed concurrently. In 1986, he designed a glass-and-steel structure integrated into the landscape of the Domaine du Montcel in Jouy-en-Josas. In 1994, he designed the emblematic building on Boulevard Raspail, which would become a reference for museum architecture. In 2009, he joined forces with the Fondation Cartier for the Île Seguin urban development project, for which he designed a 5,000 m² concrete and glass structure. Then, in 2018, Jean Nouvel developed a project to expand the Fondation Cartier onto the adjacent site of the abandoned Saint-Vincent-de-Paul hospital. He envisioned raising the existing building to create additional exhibition spaces for the Fondation Cartier Collection, a projection room, restaurant, offices, and a terrace overlooking Paris.

Museum architecture by Jean Nouvel

The project for the new Fondation Cartier at Palais-Royal embodies a culmination of Jean Nouvel's approach to the museum, which converges with the history of modern exhibition design, of which the building as context is a prime example. His vision has developed gradually through his designs for each new museum project that he has undertaken over the last forty years, whether they have been built or not. Initially a theoretical concept for the competition for the Centre Pompidou in the mid-1970s, it has since taken the form, for example, of the Institut du Monde Arabe (1987), the project for the Lucerne Culture and Congress Centre (1998) and the Louvre Abu Dhabi (2017), for which his architectural designs deconstruct the dominant codes of museological practices. Now iconic, these museum and cultural projects designed by Jean Nouvel contribute to the redefining and reformulating of the urban and architectural scope of the cultural institution, while at the same time participate in actualizing and refining the central notions of his architectural work.

*261 Boulevard Raspail, Paris

The building on Boulevard Raspail is a forerunner of the architectural and museographic evolution visible at Palais-Royal. It is an example of a rigorous contextualist approach, in search of harmony with the surrounding urbanity and in relation to the linearity of the boulevard and site constraints, such as the location of the garden and a heritage cedar. Through the use of glass, Jean Nouvel achieves a visual porosity that erases the building's physical limits and integrates it into its urban and landscape setting. This principle of transparency, expanded by the play of reflections, provides a dynamic, evolutive reading of the spaces. Architecture becomes an intermediary medium that amplifies and makes more complex our perception of exhibitions and artworks—what Paul Virilio theorized from the concept of “trans-appearance.” By generating visual superimpositions and modulating perception according to view point and light, Nouvel designed an architecture that renews the experience of the building in its interaction with its immediate environment. From the outset, the building on Boulevard Raspail conveys the determination to radically reform the exhibition system, in particular through a modular approach to its architecture. The structure of the sliding glass panels, a veritable technical feat, allows the first floor to be completely dematerialized, erasing the facades and accentuating the porosity between the exhibition space, the garden and the city.



The building of the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain located at 261 Boulevard Raspail, Paris. © Jean Nouvel / ADAGP, Paris, 2025. Photo © Luc Boegly

THE MUSEUM AS SITE OF ARCHITECTURAL EXPERIMENTATION

Public program

The public program organized during the opening days of the Biennale prolongs the topic of the 19th International Architecture Exhibition, in questioning the museum's role in fostering the future of the architectural discipline.

The program convenes architects and museum professionals in a morning-long series of conversations about one of the most interesting sites for architectural experimentation in recent decades: the museum. The program aims to foster a dynamic exchange about the role of architecture and architects in shaping cultural policy of museums and in defining our relationship to art in the urban and non-urban landscapes.

The contents of the program will be made available in video format within the exhibition spaces after the public opening

OPENING TALK: DYNAMIC ARCHITECTURES

Jean Nouvel
Ateliers Jean Nouvel

Liz Diller
Diller Scofidio + Renfro

Mark Wigley
Columbia University

RETHINKING PAVILIONS AS POTENTIAL MUSEUMS

Lina Ghotmeh
Lina Ghotmeh Architecture

Nicolas Fayad
EAST Architecture

Chris Dercon
Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain

THE ARCHITECTURAL LAYERS OF THE MUSEUM

Cecilia Puga
Chilean Museum of Pre-Columbian Art

Giovanna Borasi
Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA)

Manuel Segade
Museo Reina Sofía

CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE FOR URBAN TRANSFORMATION

Joshua Ramus
REX

Andrés Jaque
Office for Political Innovation

Antoine Picon
Harvard University Graduate School of Design

THE FONDATION CARTIER POUR L'ART CONTEMPORAIN AND ARCHITECTURE

The Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain

The Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain is a private cultural institution whose mission is to promote all fields of contemporary artistic creation to the international public through a program of temporary exhibitions, live performances, and conversations. Created in 1984 by the Maison Cartier, the institution is based in Paris in a building designed by the architect Jean Nouvel.

The Fondation Cartier's singular artistic program explores a wide array of creative fields from visual and performing arts to architecture, design, fashion, philosophy, and the sciences. For nearly four decades, the Fondation Cartier has been instrumental in revealing the talent of some of the greatest contemporary artists and has established its museum spaces as a platform where artists and scientists can meet and create projects to address major issues of today's world. Its collection consists of nearly 4,500 works from a rich and multidisciplinary program. It is a testament to the relationships forged with more than 500 artists originating from all over the globe.

The Fondation Cartier travels the world, partnering with major art institutions and engaging new audiences to discover the works of contemporary artists, and be challenged by their perspectives.

In October 2025, the Fondation Cartier will open a new exhibition space on Place du Palais-Royal in Paris. This new building, conceived by Jean Nouvel, marks a new chapter in the history of the Fondation Cartier, which positions itself as a significant actor in the ongoing urban and cultural development of the city of Paris, as well as on the global contemporary art scene.

The Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain and l'architecture

Through its programming, the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain highlights architecture, examining and questioning its history and its present, thus contributing to radically reinventing existing and future constructions by taking the exhibition as a site for inventing new forms.

For more than forty years, the Fondation Cartier has maintained its commitment to this discipline by inviting international architects to present solo exhibitions showcasing their practice. These include Bijoy Jain (India) Junya Ishigami (Japan), Jean Nouvel (France), and Diller Scofidio + Renfro (United States). These exhibitions have served as a place for breaking down barriers between architectural forms and an opportunity for continual and rich dialogue with Jean Nouvel's building. Certain architects have created monumental installations in group shows, such as the work of Lebbeus Woods for the exhibition organized by Paul Virilio *Unknown Quantity* in 2002. In 2018, Bolivian architect of Aymara origin Freddy Mamani imagined a ballroom for the exhibition *Southern Geometries, from Mexico to Patagonia*, transposing the geometric and colorful iconography of Tiwanaku culture and the spirit of popular Andean festivals to the center of Paris. For the same exhibition, Paraguayan architects Solano Benítez and Gloria Cabral designed a monumental work in shattered bricks and concrete, based on the principle of repetition.

The Fondation Cartier regularly asks architects to design the architecture of its exhibitions. Mexican architect Mauricio Rocha, for example, conceived the exhibition design for the retrospective of Mexican photographer Graciela Iturbide in 2022, while Lina Ghotmeh (Lebanon) has been invited in 2024 to imagine the architecture of the exhibition of Olga de Amaral's work.

Since 2023, the Fondation Cartier and The World Around—an itinerant institution and platform for progressive global contemporary architecture—have initiated their Global Cultural Partnership initiated to promote the work of groundbreaking thinkers in and around architecture and design from around the world.

THE FONDATION CARTIER POUR L'ART CONTEMPORAIN BY JEAN NOUVEL 2 PLACE DU PALAIS-ROYAL, PARIS

Publication

On the occasion of the inauguration of the Fondation Cartier's new spaces in Paris in October 2025, the Fondation Cartier will publish a book dedicated to Jean Nouvel's architectural project. Through numerous photographs of the building's interior and exterior spaces, the book traces the building's unique history and explores the technical feat of Jean Nouvel's architectural design. This publication features a text by Jean Nouvel, a technical presentation of his architectural project for the Fondation Cartier by Mathieu Forest, architect, studio director and Cyril Desroche, architect, project director at Ateliers Jean Nouvel, as well as two essays by leading architectural historians Antoine Picon, G. Ware Travelstead Professor of the History of Architecture and Technology at Harvard GSD, and Beatriz Colomina, Howard Crosby Butler Professor of the History of Architecture at Princeton, and an essay by Béatrice Grenier, Strategic and International Projects Director of the Fondation Cartier.

This publication sheds light on an ambitious architectural project, the culmination of nearly forty years of exchange and dialogue between the Fondation Cartier and Jean Nouvel.

***The Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain
by Jean Nouvel
2 place du Palais-Royal, Paris***

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and Antoine Picon
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THE FONDATION CARTIER POUR L'ART CONTEMPORAIN BY JEAN NOUVEL 2 PLACE DU PALAIS-ROYAL, PARIS

Foreword by Alain Dominique Perrin,
President of the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain,
and Chris Dercon, Managing Director

Extract from the publication

In October 2025, the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain will leave its premises at 261 Boulevard Raspail and moved to the center of Paris. Its new address, 2 Place du Palais-Royal, opposite the Louvre, is a historic 1855 building whose interior volumes underwent a radical redesign by the architect Jean Nouvel. The new spaces expand upon the principles of the Raspail building the architect designed for the Fondation Cartier: made entirely of glass and steel, the transparent structure and its play with immateriality shook up exhibition practices upon opening in 1994. Today Jean Nouvel's new architectural project continues to explore architecture's potential to reshape the esthetics of the museum, doing so this time within a Haussmannian building that dates back to 1855, which previously housed the Grand Hôtel du Louvre (1855–1887), then the Grands Magasins du Louvre (1887–1974), and finally the Louvre des Antiquaires (1978–2019). The governing principle of the spaces is a mechanism that enables a myriad of possible transformations of the interior of the building in service to artistic intention and exhibition design. Behind the fully preserved exterior, we find a dynamic architecture composed of five mobile platforms which allow the creation of an unexpected range of volumes, voids, and spaces, firmly placing the design of the exhibition space at the heart of the institution's artistic program.

The dynamic architecture of the Fondation Cartier is itself inscribed in a history of architecture in which Paris has played a major role. In 1925, the International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts marked the beginning of an architectural revolution. On this occasion, the modern decorative arts workshops of the booming department stores showcased presentations in which applied art and industrial production techniques converged, establishing them as key players of the architectural

innovations of the time. The Studium Louvre pavilion, a shopping mall designed by French architect Albert Laprade for the Grands Magasins du Louvre, was erected alongside the international pavilions on the Esplanade des Invalides and contributed to endowing architecture with a key role in the development of the modern exhibition. Other architectural presentations also embodied this revolution which was soon to unfold, and the conflicting ideologies that would accompany them: Le Corbusier's Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau, the *City in Space* structure designed by Frederick J. Kiesler for the Austrian section, and, above all, the Soviet pavilion by Konstantin Melnikov—a pioneering Cubist edifice—heralded the dawn of a mobile and fluid form of architecture. It was also at this same 1925 exhibition that Jean Prouvé was awarded a diploma of honor for his utilitarian, modular furniture. Later, he would join forces with architects Eugène Beaudouin and Marcel Lods, as well as engineer Vladimir Bodiansky, to design the dynamic architecture of the Maison du Peuple in Clichy (1939). With its modular floors and walls, the building was the first attempt at creating a multifunctional space, whose ambition was to offer the greatest flexibility and possibilities to its users.

Another Parisian landmark that aspired to modularity was the Centre Georges Pompidou, whose initial project, designed by Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano in 1971, featured mobile levels. Here, museum architecture was already being conceived in response to the multiplicity of uses it was intended to accommodate, some even unknown at the time. The Centre Georges Pompidou was inspired by Cedric Price's Fun Palace, an educational and cultural complex commissioned in 1960 by theater director Joan Littlewood for London's East End. The site was supposed to host an interactive multidisciplinary program, capable of adapting to the changing social

conditions of the day. Although it was never actually built, the Fun Palace had a decisive influence on the architecture of cultural institutions, their imperatives, and objectives. In 1994, Cedric Price would write: "The 21st-century 'culture center' will utilize calculated uncertainty and conscious incompleteness to produce a catalyst for invigorating change, whilst always producing 'the harvest of the quiet eye.'"

This pursuit of modular spaces has prominently featured in projects that transformed the history of architecture: Rem Koolhaas's *Maison à Bordeaux* (1994–1998) and *Lafayette Anticipations* (Paris, 2012–2018), as well as *The Shed* (New York, 2015–2019) designed by Diller Scofidio + Renfro. Highly experimental, these last two projects had to comply with the regulations that public buildings must adhere to, as well as the challenges that arise with inventing operative models to program these new types of spaces. Drawing on the lessons learned from these architectural sites, the new spaces designed by Jean Nouvel for the *Fondation Cartier* are in line with these efforts to design a cultural institution that is both modular and adaptable.

Beyond the dialogue on the evolution of museum spaces and what they should welcome and make possible, Jean Nouvel's architectural project also responds to the historical urban Parisian context in which it is situated. The *Grands Magasins du Louvre* once played an essential role in the heart of the capital's cultural life. Through his transformation of the site, Jean Nouvel highlights the existing architectural and urban elements that exemplify this historical modernity of the 19th century. The tall picture windows that have been added and which run along the facades make the building transparent and reveal the entirety of the interior from one end to the other, forming a visual system that reinterprets the building's vitrines, which once allowed passersby to gaze at the wide variety of objects on display as they strolled by. The addition of a glass awning, reminiscent of the one that once ran along that same *Rue Saint-Honoré* and *Rue de Marengo*, reinforces this unique urban unity and merges the experiences of the street, the historic arcades, and the interior spaces. Similarly, the addition of three glass ceilings, equipped with shutters that vary brightness levels, allows the sky and natural light to feature as an element in the exhibition spaces.



Site view of the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain's future premises, Place du Palais-Royal, Paris, March 2025. © Jean Nouvel / ADAGP, Paris, 2025. Photo © Martin Argyrogio

The dynamic architecture is further strengthened by the porosity that exists with the exterior, profoundly affecting the visitor's experience of the building, depending on the season or time of day it is visited.

This book delves into Jean Nouvel's architectural project for the Fondation Cartier, explains its technical specificities, and highlights the role it plays in its urban environment, all while putting it in perspective with the history of dynamic architecture and exhibition spaces. In his text entitled "Machine (E)motion," Antoine Picon relates Jean Nouvel's "architectural machine" to the stage devices used in theater. He explores the way in which the platforms serve to introduce new ways of presenting and experiencing works. In "The Unstable Ground of Art," Beatriz Colomina analyzes the dynamic and changing nature of Jean Nouvel's architecture, considering the new spaces of the Fondation Cartier as a "machine for seeing" that revolutionizes ways of exhibiting.

All the architectural elements, whether original, reconstructed, or added, of the Fondation Cartier building now form a unity that anchors the institution in its current and past urban context. These conceptual intentions and the technical aspects of its implementation are detailed in texts authored by Jean Nouvel and the two head architects on the project: Mathieu Forest and Cyril Desroche, from the Ateliers Jean Nouvel.

In a sense, this new space created for the Fondation Cartier represents a culmination of Jean Nouvel's thinking on museum spaces. His vision has been built progressively, through each of the museum projects he has designed over the past fifty years. It began theoretically with the competition for the Centre Georges Pompidou in 1971 and continued with the Institut du monde arabe (1987), the Fondation Cartier Boulevard Raspail (1994), the Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac (2006), and the Louvre Abu Dhabi (2017), architectural projects that can be said to have deconstructed the dominant codes of museological practices. Furthering this, in a text entitled "Between Preservation and Modernization: The Architecture of Jean Nouvel," Béatrice Grenier analyzes how the architect's approach to the Fondation Cartier building on the Place du Palais-Royal is part of a broader reflection on the relationship between architecture and the city. By studying a panorama of cultural sites and museums designed by Jean Nouvel, in France and abroad, she examines the way in which he transcends the ontological limitations of architecture by designing buildings that are no longer autonomous entities but rather extensions of the urban landscape.

The new spaces of the Fondation Cartier testify to the collaboration between the Fondation and Jean Nouvel, which spans almost forty years. Beyond the building on the Boulevard Raspail and the one located on the Place du Palais-Royal, Jean Nouvel designed multiple projects

that reflect the institution's evolution. While these spaces never actually saw the light of day, they have contributed to his theories about museum spaces. In 1986, he first imagined a glass and steel building integrated into the landscape of the Montcel Estate in Jouy-en-Josas, where the Fondation Cartier had been located since 1984. In 2009, as part of the urban development project for the Île Seguin, he sketched plans for a concrete and glass structure to house its exhibitions. Finally, in 2018, Jean Nouvel designed an extension for the Boulevard Raspail site on the neighboring grounds of the Saint-Vincent-de-Paul Hospital, which had been abandoned for several years.

The Fondation Cartier has always placed the practice of architecture at the heart of its programming, considering it to be a vector for interdisciplinary dialogue. Today, at 2 Place du Palais-Royal, the institution materializes a vision of architecture which enables a merging of disciplines, visual art, performance, theater, science, and new technologies. Merging with public space, past and future coexist in a building that is at once an extension of the urban landscape, a reflection of its history, and the perfect application of a dynamic architecture at the service of a cultural institution.

A PLACE FOR THE UNEXPECTED

By Jean Nouvel

Extract from the publication

The Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain by Jean Nouvel

2 place du Palais-Royal, Paris

The Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain is a place of experimentation and discovery, whose identity will find extraordinary expression in this historic district. The Fondation may very well be the missing piece in an urban composition encompassing strategic, administrative, cultural, and political sites around the Place du Palais-Royal. Most of these edifices were built over different eras, each contributing to the urban landscape—silting down, creating, enriching, contrasting. I believe that the mission of such Parisian sites today is to invent spaces and new ways of doing that are compatible with, and even revelations of, history. Therefore, I don't believe that the Rue de Rivoli is irrevocably fated to house a series of shops beneath its arcades. Changing the original vocation of the building at 2 Place du Palais-Royal is an effort to make it more generous towards Paris, but also more representative of Paris. The Fondation Cartier is, in a way, deepening the site. In a dual movement, history is being introduced into the heart of the Fondation Cartier and artistic production into the heart of the city.



Site view of the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain's future premises, Place du Palais-Royal, Paris, March 2025. © Jean Nouvel / ADAGP, Paris, 2025. Photo © Martin Argyroglo

The new Fondation Cartier space extends beyond its new building, encompassing the Palais-Royal district itself. On the ground level, the glass facades overlooking the Rue de Rivoli and Rue Saint-Honoré allow the gaze to travel the space from one street to the other, with the inside and outside intermingling. The transparency of the flanking display windows intensifies this sense of belonging to the heart of Paris, as do the zenithal glass roofs atop which trees rise. The gaze meets the sky over Paris and this floating forest, which seems to root the Fondation Cartier even more strongly in the historical cityscape. That sense of limitlessness prevails as well from the perspective of the Place du Palais-Royal: the interior of the Haussmannian block, which has been cleared out along its entire length, provides a 150-meter-long view all the way to the Rue de Marengo. The whole point of the operation was to reveal the building's emptiness, its depth, its height. It is important to understand, and architecture is evolving in this direction, that it is not a question of building a space, but of building *in space*. This emptiness is the site of expression, the basis of all possibilities.

Moving into a site so impressive, in terms of location and history, entails inventing something. And what is invented is not automatically visible in steel or stone. What develops is a different way of doing: a way of conceiving how artists can have maximum power of expression. A site such as this demands boldness, a courage that artists might not necessarily demonstrate in other institutional settings. Like the Greeks, I've always thought of museums as ideal spaces for expressing ideas, talking, being both there and elsewhere, inside and outside, in the city, and more. I try to bring this possibility to each of my projects of this type.

Through architecture, we bear witness to an era. What matters is the impact and the way we discover what is directly related to history. At the Boulevard Raspail site, what was likely hard to understand in the beginning was the importance of "almost nothings:" how architectural elements imperceptibly adapt; how light varies with the seasons, depending on how leaves grow or rain falls. It is a building of great nuance. At the Fondation Cartier, Place du Palais-Royal, this interplay of perpetual variations occurs inside the building.

Within this architecture, of which only the typically 19th-century facade and a handful of structural elements have been preserved, an industrial cathedral of rare volume and immense scope is found. It exudes a strong expression of power. Its five steel platforms, with their visible mobile mechanisms, are in total contrast to the external Hausmannian architecture. It's something of a super-theater whose multiple weighty stages may be lifted. This innovation isn't simply functional or scenographic; for me, it is architectural, in that it is dynamic. The innovation lies in being able to access all these different elevations, as well as these variable levels of lighting, down to complete darkness, through the shades on the glass roofs and flanking display windows.

Of all institutions, the Fondation Cartier will most likely be the one to offer the greatest differentiation among its spaces, the most diverse exhibition forms and viewpoints. Its powerful platforms can hold extremely

heavy works and display them in entirely novel ways. Here, it is possible to do what cannot be done elsewhere, by transforming the system of the act of showing. This might lead to highly distinctive exhibitions, depending on what artists, curators and exhibitions designers dream up. It's a site that allows for nearly infinite possibilities, with spaces that can be stretched to great heights and depths, or extremely compressed. Depending on the chosen configuration, these "can-do" spaces will demonstrate their variable geometry over the course of different projects. This movement is what should strike the beholder—the fact that this shape-shifting space, visible from the Rue de Rivoli and Rue Saint-Honoré, is perpetually surprising. The Fondation Cartier creates a territory for art, to be explored from inside or outside, in a constant interplay of osmosis and impact.

Paris, 2024



Site view of the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain's future premises, Place du Palais-Royal, Paris, March 2025. © Jean Nouvel / ADAGP, Paris, 2025. Photo © Martin Argyrogio

BETWEEN PRESERVATION AND MODERNIZATION: THE ARCHITECTURE OF JEAN NOUVEL

By Béatrice Grenier, Strategic and International Projects
Director of the Fondation Cartier

Extracts from the publication

The Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain by Jean Nouvel
2 place du Palais-Royal, Paris

A city, as a collection of architectural works, can be thought of as a museum. Any new building has the potential to express the urban heritage that shaped the site on which it was erected. Jean Nouvel applies this philosophy, which he calls “contextualism,” to all his architectural projects. His Louisiana Manifesto, pronounced in 2005 at the Denmark Museum of Modern Art, took the museum as its object. The architect described the theoretical principles shaping his work, both retroactively and for the future. His museum projects have sought to radicalize architecture's role in relation to the city and over time have become emblematic of their respective urban environments. The new building for the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain at 2 Place du Palais-Royal, in Paris, crystallizes Jean Nouvel's longstanding examination of the role of museum architecture vis-à-vis the city in establishing a dialectic between preservation and modernization.

[...]



The building that will house the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain from October 2025, Place du Palais-Royal, Paris. Interior architecture by Jean Nouvel., March 2025. © Jean Nouvel / ADAGP, Paris, 2025. Photo © Martin Argyroglo

The City Is a Museum

The material condition of architecture presupposes division from its context, the urban space in which it inscribes itself. In the modern metropolis, architecture is the materiality that divides one finite artifact from another. Yet with every building Jean Nouvel completely transcends this ontological limitation, surpassing the treatment of architecture in terms of a possible historical enclosure, separate from the city, while paradoxically the precise materiality of it suggests this very condition. By disavowing the differentiation between the city and the architectural object, for both new or extant buildings, Jean Nouvel creates the circumstances for the boundlessness of historical time to permeate the meaning of architectural content, subverting any necessity for choice between modernization and preservation. Jean Nouvel recognizes the openness and continuity of history; he addresses it with architecture. With every project, he seeks to prolong the spirit of a city as an expression of a living civilization: the urban space is also the space of the museum.

[...]

The project described a modernity that respected its surrounding context, in a natural and historical sense: “It is in places where history has already manifested itself that modernity has a duty to impose itself, for these places of history have in their time been places of modernity.” For Jean Nouvel, the historical past is projected in the future of architecture.

[...]

Building upon a Parisian Modernity: The Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Place du Palais-Royal

For the new exhibition spaces of the Fondation Cartier, Nouvel's stance towards the city is pushed towards the extreme in the hyper-historical center of Paris; the distinction between the city and the architectural object has radically disappeared. The building, which first housed the Grand Hôtel du Louvre (1855–1887) is historically an urban fragment which emerged on the city's map with the extension of the rue de Rivoli during the first phase of Haussmann's works.



Grands Magasins du Louvre, 1880.

Jean Nouvel's architectural gesture restores the building to the city—to the block of marble out of which it was carved—revealing the symbol of modernity it represents, all the while pushing it into possible futures. Preservation is too pessimistic a view of time: Jean Nouvel's project for the new venue of the Fondation Cartier, inaugurated in 2025, shows that time's passage, in the heart of Paris, does not incur the dissolution of the city, but conversely, with the architectural mutation he proposes, captures its most contemporary expression. Indeed, in the Fondation Cartier Place du Palais-Royal there is no divide between construction and preservation, city and architecture, past and future. The building is at once an extension of the urban landscape and an image of its history. Along the rue de Rivoli, a series of bay windows seven meters high allow passers-by to look not only inside the building but also through the entire city block and see the city. From within, one looks up and beholds the facade of the Louvre. Beneath every other courtyard punctuating the building, hanging gardens offer a view of the sky amidst greenery that, referencing the Palais Royal gardens, is undeniably Parisian. The entrance, at street level, joins the address to the place du Palais-Royal—one of Paris' oldest squares, linking the gardens to the Louvre—thus creating an absolute continuity with history, allowing it to permeate modernity's future within.

[...]



Site view of the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain's future premises, Place du Palais-Royal, Paris, March 2025. © Jean Nouvel / ADAGP, Paris, 2025. Photo © Martin Argüyroglu

Five platforms of two hundred square meters, which can be adjusted to different heights, suggest the abstraction of any possible city to be built above the historical foundations of Lutèce. Kinetic floors and ceilings punctuated by cables and pulleys evoke the specter of the industrial age that saw the birth of the original architecture of the Grand Hôtel du Louvre. The possibility of perpetual mutation evoked by the dormant mobility of the exhibition armature with which Jean Nouvel has equipped the Fondation Cartier captures the ambition of a nascent modern Paris at the time of the first Universal Exposition the city hosted in 1855. The interior architectural landscape is an impressive sight: retractable ceilings temper the amount of light that punctuates the day, marking the passage of time, while movable floors are potentially interchangeable with ceilings; mechanical guardrails that operate according to the platforms' designated heights add or subtract possible interior lookouts. History has transformed the face of the Paris in which we are immersed; Jean Nouvel invites us to speculate on its possible futures. With the infinite possibility of exhibition making, the architecture inserted into an emblematic past modernity is projected into all possible formulations of the future.

At the Fondation Cartier, 2 Place du Palais-Royal, Jean Nouvel has made the city and the museum one and the same, sublimating any possible distinction between modernization and preservation. One enters to discover that the city is a collection of possibilities, and that its future hypothetical iterations might manifest on these speculative platforms.

THE UNSTABLE GROUND OF ART

By Beatriz Colomina, Howard Crosby Butler Professor of the History of Architecture at Princeton

Extracts from the publication

The Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain by Jean Nouvel
2 place du Palais-Royal, Paris

"Today we go to the [Grands Magasins du] Louvre as we would to a museum, an exhibition," wrote the journalist and playwright Alfred d'Aunay in 1880. "We enjoy these superb immensities. We come for pleasure, to see beautiful things, to admire the masterpieces of our opulent factories, to explore all the seductive fantasies, the adorable caprices of the industry of elegance."

A century and a half later, the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain opens its new exhibition spaces, designed by Jean Nouvel, in that very department store building, occupying the whole block from the Place du Palais-Royal to the Rue de Marengo, from the Rue de Rivoli to the Rue Saint-Honoré.

[...]



The Tuileries, the Louvre, and Rue de Rivoli, 1860. Source: Bibliothèque nationale de France

Platform Fever

The new space of the Fondation Cartier reclaims this mechanical legacy, preserving the envelope of the original building and inserting five enormous independently moving platforms that take their measure from the courtyards of the original building, as if using their voids to reanimate the building. The stable unchanged exterior structure now hosts a vertiginous instability. The mobile platforms are, not by chance, made by a company expert in the moving stages of theaters. They represent a dramatic and radical transformation of traditional spaces for the exhibition of art.

[...]

Jean Nouvel's architectural gesture channels the history of the building—returning to the moment when everyday life was first mechanized, and new ways of viewing were initiated—the moment in modern life when the floor was always moving. Everything was displayed from multiple changing angles. Viewers viewed in multiple ways, and they themselves were being viewed. There was no shared solid ground, only ever-changing interrelationships.

[...]



Site view of the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain's future premises, Place du Palais-Royal, Paris, March 2025. © Jean Nouvel / ADAGP, Paris, 2025. Photo © Martin Argyroglo

Reinventing Art

The new space that Jean Nouvel has designed for the Fondation Cartier forces art to live outside the safety of museums. There are no gallery walls and what is displayed can be seen from the streets through the arcade picture windows that once showed goods in the stores. The new space is part of the streetscape; a form of streetscape itself. It offers new possibilities for what it means to exhibit art, not just to the audience in the building, but to the passersby in the street, who can see through the whole building from the Rue de Rivoli to the Rue Saint-Honoré. In fact, standing on the Rue de Rivoli, passersby can simultaneously see sculptures in the Louvre museum, provocatively positioned near

the glass windows as if to tempt them, and glimpse fragments of works of arts or performance in the Fondation Cartier, all while being themselves observed from all sides. Conversely, the visitors inside the building never completely leave the street. The monumental building is perforated by multiple gazes that cut through the city. In a sense, it is not an interior but a continuation of the exterior, an animation of the street level.

[...]

Curators are no longer in a safe bubble. The usual gallery protocols are of no use in this alternative optical machine. Curators must invent rather than simply presenting artworks, “shifting the system of the act of showing,” in Nouvel’s words. Artists too are handed an enormous challenge, a power usually reserved to architects. Space becomes part of their work. The ability to adjust the platforms to different levels will inevitably engage their architectural capacities, provoking new ways of occupying space, new kinds of work, new angles, new sensations. When the floor moves, nothing about art can be taken for granted. It may also force artists into new and productive collaborations. Art can become something else, should be something else. As Nouvel put it, “what is invented is not automatically seen in the steel or stone. The space is marked by a different way of doing: a way of conceiving how artists can have maximum power of expression.” The Fondation Cartier has never been a “container” for art that existed somewhere else, but rather an institution that creates content, commissioning numerous work for its spaces, often conceived or produced for specific sites, whether Jouy-en-Josas, the first site of the foundation, near Versailles (1984–1994), or the Nouvel building on the boulevard Raspail (1994–2025). The Fondation engaged artists and architects in exhibition design and asked artists to rework their pieces when showing them in a different space. Nothing in the Collection of the Fondation Cartier exists outside a particular space. In that sense, the Collection is already infused with architecture.

[...]

In an age in which more and more artists engage with architecture, the new spaces seem an open invitation. Artists, curators, and visitors all become a new kind of architect engaging space.

[...]

And it is not just the floors that move. Other machines shift panels to adjust or block the light from the glass ceilings above. The mechanisms reject the stability of conventional museums and galleries to present different landscapes and incubate a multiplicity of imagined landscapes as each visitor mentally moves the platforms. A dream space, then, magnified by the surrealism

of looking up through the glass skylights to see trees, to be as it were, in the space of the roots, yet another destabilizing effect.

[...]

To visit the building is to see the works on display, but equally the mechanism of display as a mobile work of art. And yet the place is not just for showing art. It is a space to encounter others in its streetscape and thereby encounter yourself. If this is a theater, a mobile stage, the visitors are the actors, and everything is a performance. This immense mechanism is an invitation to act.



Site view of the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain's future premises, Place du Palais-Royal, Paris, March 2025. © Jean Nouvel / ADAGP, Paris, 2025. Photo © Martin Argyroglo

MACHINE (E)MOTION

By Antoine Picon, G. Ware Travelstead Professor of the History of Architecture and Technology at Harvard GSD

Extracts from the publication

The Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain by Jean Nouvel

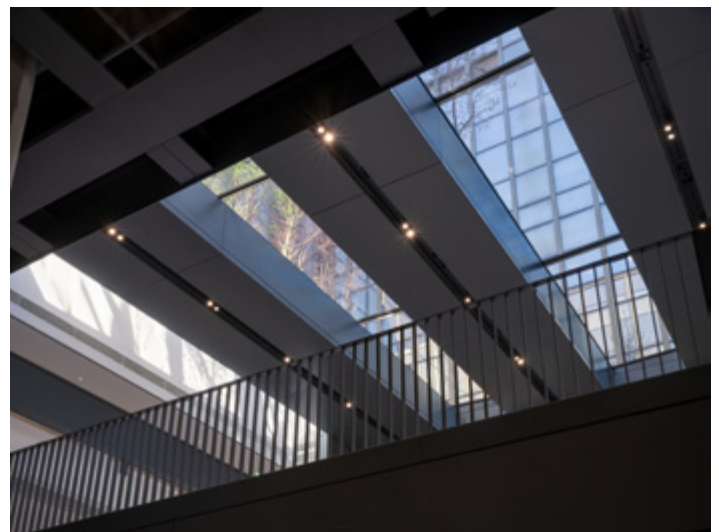
2 place du Palais-Royal, Paris

Wonderment in Architecture

In this building so close to the Louvre, what seems all of a piece is undergirded by oppositions that, as they are gradually perceived, bring the architect's choices into high relief. The first is a paradoxical relationship with movement. This immense space is suggestive of a ship, an aircraft carrier or a liner, but, rather than sailing, the vessel is anchored right in the center of the city. Nonetheless, its immobility is offset by the flexibility enabled by the vertical movement of the platforms, which can each occupy eleven different positions and thus offer a multitude of combinations. Such modularity calls to mind the versatility aspired to in the 1960s and '70s by projects like Cedric Price's Fun Palace and the first version of the Centre Pompidou by Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers, which were meant to be almost completely convertible. So—from immobility to movement. However, the arches and columns supporting the upper floors of the block occupied by the Fondation Cartier, and the apparent fixity of the platforms that only move between two exhibition height settings, complicate the situation. These elements tell a more static story, one firmly anchored in a traditional approach to monumentality. In this respect, the stone arches around the first platform encountered by the visitor play a determining role. Their simplicity makes them look almost neoclassical and the image they convey is above all one of reassuring stability. Immobility and movement: when all is said and done, these contradictory characteristics of the space and its materials are difficult to separate.

A yet more tangible opposition resides in the contrast between the minimalism of the general conception and the complexity of the technical means used in its realization. The architectural project appears hybrid: part building, part machine. An impressive display of cables, pulleys, and motors enables the platforms to move. Systems using electric linear actuators allow the platforms to be locked at different heights, while articulated cable carriers supply the power and control networks for the components the platforms carry. Horizontal shutters modulate the light entering from the block's internal courtyards.

Technology is apparent everywhere, but in a form that suggests the early days of the machinist era, taking a mechanical and electrical rather than digital form, though a command-and-control system guides the platforms' movements, keeping them secure at every stage.



Site view of the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain's future premises, Place du Palais-Royal, Paris, March 2025. © Jean Nouvel / ADAGP, Paris, 2025. Photo © Martin Argyroglo

This machinery evokes the novels of Jules Verne or representations of industry in early to mid-20th-century films, as opposed to the Hollywood science fiction of today.

Jean Nouvel's purpose in using technology is not to appear high-tech or to present the image of an avant-garde architect using the latest developments. It is instead one element in a search to create effects that are both palpable and poetic. This disavowal of the most recent technological advances and reference to a kind of generic machinist era invest the project with a certain modernity, yet also a strange timelessness that is almost archaic. Considered in this light, the mobile platforms are like large sacrificial stones or altars that accommodate works of art as though they were offerings. Although cinematic in character, the technical vision deployed by Jean Nouvel tends towards the universal with its combination of simplicity and complexity, contemporaneity and detachment from actuality.

[...]

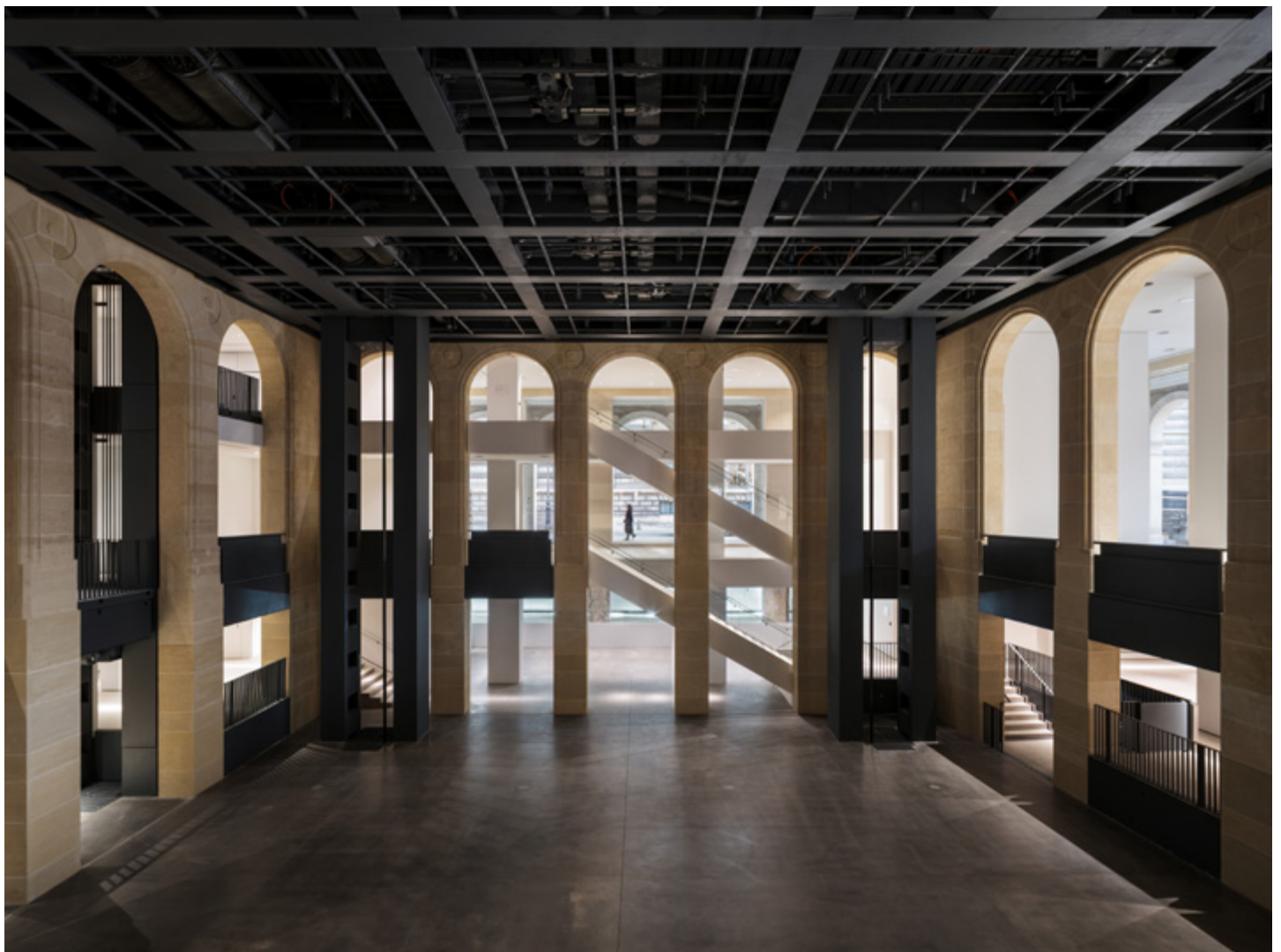
Theaters and Machines

The solution formulated by Jean Nouvel suggests new ways of presenting works of art. The space in most museums and foundations is divided up into closed areas, usually painted white, like a series of boxes created to accommodate the works. The Fondation Cartier's visual openness allows very different exhibitions to liaise with one another, stimulating new dialogues. One is reminded of the permanent gallery at the Louvre-Lens, where the eye can rove from Greco-Roman antiquities to medieval art or to paintings and sculptures from the 18th and 19th centuries, offering inspiring comparisons. Jean Nouvel's conception takes this fortuitousness even further by playing on the relative heights of the platforms and creating a distance between viewer and exhibition that allows the eye to partially grasp their content. His theater is truly three-dimensional, transforming the space into a landscape of objects and collections.

[...]

Expanding the Architectural Field

While maintaining a distance from the conventional understanding of architecture, the Fondation Cartier's new space is an architectural achievement that outshines many monuments. It acts by immersing visitors in a unique atmosphere and offering them a different relationship to the objects on display and the exhibitions it hosts. Returning one last time to the metaphor of the theater, this architectural feat may be compared to a stage designed to receive actors of all kinds. Its role is to suggest that the scenarios that play out there have meaning and are rich in consequences. Jean Nouvel's project adopts this strategy. It is not monumental in the traditional sense. It does not fetishize technology, but employs it to serve an original and poetic vision. It offers an experience that enriches the visitor, and in so doing pertains to that endurance that alone allows the human world to exist.



Site view of the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain's future premises, Place du Palais-Royal, Paris, March 2025. © Jean Nouvel / ADAGP, Paris, 2025. Photo © Martin Argyrogio

JEAN NOUVEL – BIOGRAPHY

Architect, born in Fumel (France) 1945.

After he enrolled at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Bordeaux, Jean Nouvel entered the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris in 1966 and obtained his degree in 1971. Assistant to the architect Claude Parent and inspired by urban planner and essayist Paul Virilio, he started his first architecture practice in 1970. Soon afterwards, he became a founding member of the French Architecture Union and the “Mars 1976” Movement whose purpose was to oppose the architects’ corporatism.

His strong stances and somewhat provocative opinions on contemporary architecture in the urban context together with his unfailing ability to inject originality into all the projects he undertakes have formed his international image. Jean Nouvel’s work does not result from considerations of style or ideology, but from a quest to create a unique concept for a singular combination of people, place and time. His contextual approach and ability to infuse a genuine uniqueness into all the projects he undertakes have consistently yielded buildings that transform their environments and indelibly mark the cities in which they are built.

His works have gained world-wide recognition through numerous prestigious French and International prizes and rewards. In 1989, The Arab World Institute in Paris was awarded the Aga-Khan Prize because of its role as “*a successful bridge between French and Arab cultures.*” In 2000, Jean Nouvel received the Lion d’Or of the Venice Biennale. In 2001, he received three of the highest international awards: the Royal Gold Medal of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), the Praemium Imperiale of Japan’s Fine Arts Association and the Borromini Prize for the Culture and Conference Center in Lucerne. He was appointed Docteur Honoris Causa of the Royal College of Art in London in 2002. The Agbar Tower in Barcelona was awarded the International Highrise Award 2006 in Frankfurt, “*as it makes an outstanding contribution to the current debate on high-rises.*” Jean Nouvel was the recipient of the prestigious Pritzker Prize in 2008. In France, he has received many awards including the Gold Medal from the French Academy of Architecture, two “*Équerres d’Argent*” and the title of Officer of the Legion of Honor.

Among its main projects and studies in progress are the new Fondation Cartier pour l’art contemporain – Palais Royal (Paris), the Sharaan Desert Resort (AIUla), the Shenzhen Opera, the Tencent Tower (Guangzhou), the Querola d’Ordino housing (Andorra), the Humanization and Expansion Projects of the Palais du Peuple (Paris) and the William Booth Residence (Marseille), the transformation of the Galeries Lafayette (Berlin), the Aviation Academy (Singapore) and the National Art Museum of China – NAMOC (Beijing)...

Principal completed projects

Arab World Institute (Paris - 1987), Opera House (Lyon – 1993), Fondation Cartier pour l’art contemporain (Paris – 1994), Galeries Lafayette (Berlin – 1996), Culture and Congress Centre - KKL (Lucerne – 2000), Law court (Nantes - 2000), Dentsu Tower (Tokyo – 2002), Agbar Tower (Barcelona – 2005), Reina Sofía Museum extension (Madrid – 2005), Musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac (Paris – 2006), Guthrie Theater (Minneapolis – 2006), Richemont Headquarters (Geneva – 2006), 40 Mercer housing building (New York – 2008), Concert Hall - DR (Denmarks Radio) (Copenhagen – 2009), Ferrari’s Factory (Maranello – 2009), One New Change (London – 2010), 100 11th avenue (New York – 2010), Sofitel Stephansdom (Vienna – 2010), City Hall (Montpellier – 2011), Doha High Rise Office Building (2011), Renaissance Barcelona Fira hotel (Barcelona – 2012), mixed use high-rise building One Central Park (Sydney – 2014), Imagine Institute (Paris – 2014), Anderson 18 & Nouvel Ardmore (Singapore – 2015), housing, office, and retail tower The White Walls (Nicosia – 2015), Philharmonie de Paris (2015), Le Nouvel KLCC residential tower (Kuala Lumpur – 2016), Louvre Abu Dhabi (2017), Fondazione Alda Fendi (Rome – 2018), office tower La Marseillaise (Marseille – 2018), Stelios Ioannou Learning Resource Center – University of Cyprus (Nicosia – 2018), Ycone residential tower (Lyon - 2019), National Museum of Qatar (Doha – 2019), 53W53 Tower integrating the extension of the MoMA galleries (New York – 2019), CEVA train stations (Geneva – 2019), Dolce&Gabbana Flagship Store (Seoul – 2021), Marc Ladreit de Lacharrière Gallery - Musée du quai Branly (Paris – 2021), offices and retails Henderson Cifi Tiandi - The Roof (Shanghai – 2021), Museum of Art Pudong - MAP (Shanghai - 2021), The Artists’ Garden, (Qingdao – 2021), the residential tower and hotel Rosewood (São Paulo – 2022), the office towers Duo and Hekla (Paris – 2022), Start Museum (Shanghai – 2022), facade and lobby of the pop-up Samsung Store 125 (Paris – 2024), Samsung Pavilion (Paris – 2024), UBS headquarters (Monaco – UBS).

INFORMATION

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Vaporetto line 2, direction S. Marco-San Zaccaria,
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