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Manuelle Gautrand wins "highest award" for European architects



[Eleanor Gibson](#) | Published 15 hours ago | [Leave a comment](#)

French architect [Manuelle Gautrand](#) has been named as this year's laureate of the European Prize for Architecture, making her the first woman to receive the accolade.

The annual [European Prize for Architecture](#) was set up in 2010 to recognise European architects who have made a commitment to advance "the principles of European humanism and the art of architecture".

Danish architect [Bjarke Ingels](#), the founder of architecture firm [BIG](#), and Spanish architect [Santiago Calatrava](#) are among the previous winners of the prize described as the "highest award for architecture".



Gautrand's most recognised work includes the angular Cité des Affaires office building in French city Saint-Etienne

Gautrand, who runs Paris-based [Manuelle Gautrand Architecture](#), is both the first female and the first French architect to be named laureate. She was selected in recognition of her "boldness and non-conformity" by the organisers, [The European Centre for Architecture Art Design and Urban Studies](#) and [The Chicago Athenaeum: Museum of Architecture and Design](#).

"All her projects express a specific relationship to the site: a desire to revive it and enchant; a deep commitment to working on the programmes entrusted to the firm, make them even more efficient, more malleable and more unexpected," said president of The Chicago Athenaeum, Christian Narkiewicz-Laine.

"Her works admirably and poetically fulfil the traditional requirements of architecture for physical and spatial beauty along with function and craftsmanship, but what sets them apart is their approach that creates buildings and places that are both local and universal at the same time," Narkiewicz-Laine added.



Other well-known works include the Lille Métropole Musée d'art moderne, d'art contemporain et d'art brut at Villeneuve d'Ascq

After graduating from The École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture of Montpellier in 1985, Gautrand worked for six years in Parisian architecture studios before she founded her eponymous studio in Lyons in 1991 with partner Marc Blaising.

The team moved to Paris three years later and has completed a number of cultural facilities such as theatres, museums, and cultural centres, as well as office buildings, housing and commercial spaces.

Among her best-recognised work is the angular Cité des Affaires office building in French city Saint-Etienne. Completed in 2011, the building is looped around a courtyard and features a bright yellow underbelly.

The firm's other well-known accomplishments include an extension to the Lille Métropole Musée d'art moderne, d'art contemporain et d'art brut at Villeneuve d'Ascq and the green-hued Hipark Hotel.

Last year, Manuelle Gautrand Architecture completed an orange-toned events building in Saint-Louis comprising 13 blocks.

By awarding its first female laureate, the European Prize for Architecture forms part of a growing focus on gender-equality in the industry.

Earlier this year in an Opinion column for Dezeen, Danish architect Dorte Mandrup called for an end to the term "female architect", arguing that its use was a step in the wrong direction for equality.

Former laureate Bjarke Ingels also got caught up in the debate after an Instagram post of BIG's 12 partners featured only one woman.

Sheela Maini Søgaard, the only woman among the team, later spoke out to defend the gender balance and diversity in the firm.