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BY MVRDV*

*AN ART COLLECTOR'S  
LOFT BY UNSTUDIO*

*DESIGNERS AT  
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## *Spatial Encounters*

The Architecture Issue



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# ART REVIVAL

MANUELLE GAUTRAND ARCHITECTS  
REJUVENATES **THE LILLE MUSEUM OF ART**  
WITH A MODERN NEW EXTENSION.

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY MAX LEROUNGE AND PHILLIPE RUALT







**T**he *Lille Museum of Modern, Contemporary and Outsider Art (LAM)* was first designed and completed in 1983 by French architect *Roland Simounet*, most known for his design of the *Musée Picasso* in Paris. The red-bricked LAM in Villeneuve d'Ascq is one of the most important museums in France for holding the largest outsider art collection in the country and even holds masterpieces from artists like *Pablo Picasso*, *Georges Braque* and *Joan Miró*.

But over two decades worth of wear and tear had put the museum in desperate need of refurbishment and an extension. So in 2006, LAM closed its doors as *Manuelle Gautrand Architects* took to the task of polishing up the original building and sculpting an organic, new extension to house a collection of modern, contemporary and art brut works.

Designing an extension to LAM, slated as a historic monument, is intimidating to say the least and its important heritage was not lost on *Manuelle Gautrand*, principal of Manuelle Gautrand Architects.

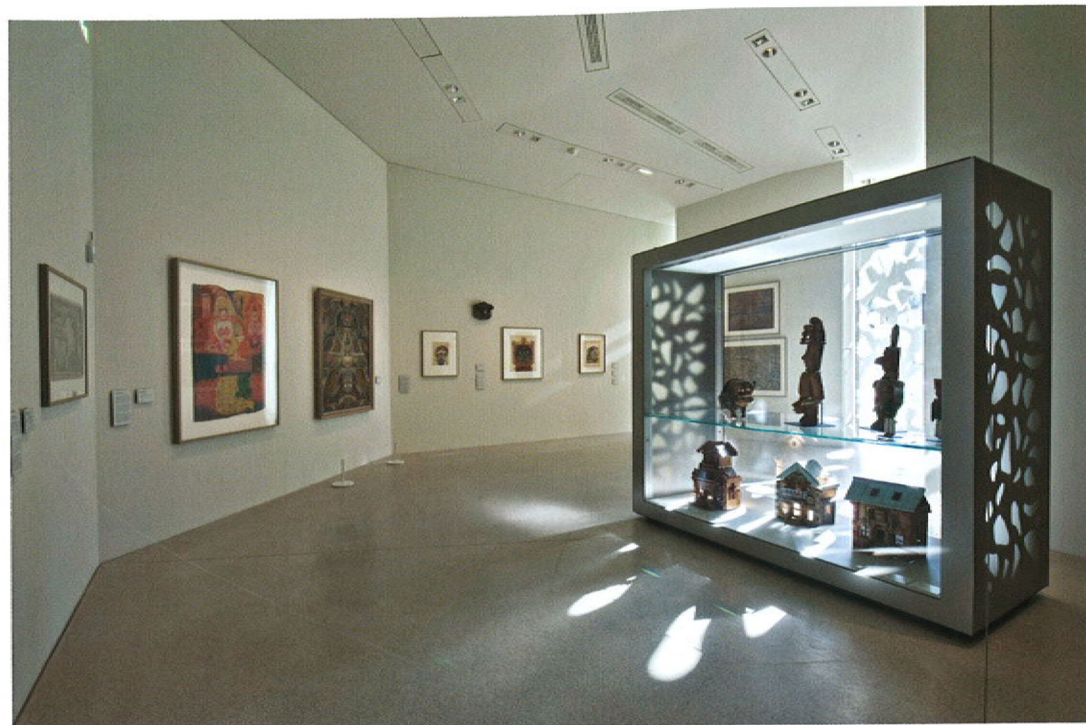


↑ **ART IN THE PARK:**  
The new extension looks out towards the sculpture park

← **NIGHT LIGHT:**  
The galleries light up like lanterns as the sun sets.



**FINE FILIGREE:**  
The cut-outs in the concrete shell give rise to shadow plays inside



But instead of setting the extension apart from the original building, Gautrand chose to embrace the latter with his new extension. “I tried to take my cue from Roland Simounet’s architecture, ‘to learn to understand’, so as to be able to develop a project that does not mark aloofness – an attitude that might have been seen as indifference,” says Gautrand.

The extension consists of a series of long, fluid concrete volumes that wrap around the north and east of the existing building. On the northern end, the volumes sidle up close to the original building but gradually fan out to form five galleries as they bow towards the eastern side of the building. Every angle and turn seen in the form marks a new unveiling of art within the galleries as visitors travel through the volumes in an organic journey of discovery.

Even though the extension and the original building appear quite different at first glance, there is a clear sensitivity to his predecessor that Gautrand applied in his design. “Our objective was never to compete with Simounet’s design, but to attempt to extend it...” the architect explains. Taking their cue from the scale and proportions that Simounet first established, the design team carefully inserted the long volumes into the contours of the site, allowing them to hug the terrain, which is part of a nature reserve known as the *Parc du Héron*. The intention was to create the impression of “buildings emerging

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**SHINE AND SHIMMER:**  
The concrete shell has a pearlescent finish that shades according to the sunlight

from the topography”. Gautrand points out that “Simounet himself was in the habit of talking about ‘staying close to the ground line’”.

The impetus for the use of concrete as a main material also stems from the concrete cornice strips that cap Simounet’s original red-bricked construct. Poured on-site, the concrete volumes have a slight colour tint that shades ever so subtly according to the intensity of light and feature a surface pattern generated by a matrix that was integrated into the formwork. At certain junctures, these biomorphic surface patterns puncture right through the concrete shell and form an intricate filigree that rightly mediates the amount of light entering the galleries. This also allows the galleries to maintain a strong sense of connection to the vast sculpture park outside. And at night, the galleries glow through the concrete lattice, a glimmer of light within the sleeping Villeneuve d’Ascq park. ♦

[musee-lam.fa](http://musee-lam.fa)

[manuelle-gautrand.com](http://manuelle-gautrand.com)