



HORIZONS IN MOTION

THE FRAC CENTRE-VAL DE LOIRE COLLECTION

Horizons in motion

Since 1991, the Frac Centre-Val de Loire has brought together contemporary art and experimental architecture dating from the 1950s to the current day in a single collection. With more than 20,000 works and almost 500 artists and architects represented, the critical dimension of architecture is presented, as well as its power for vision and utopia. The works create an interdisciplinary dialogue around the idea of “project”, where architectural drawings and models can intersect with the exploratory phases of the artistic process.

The permanent gallery invites visitors to immerse themselves into 4 of the main acquisition focuses of this collection, revealing a history of forward-looking architecture, rooted in an interdisciplinary approach. Firstly, Architecture-sculpture, championed from the 1950s onwards by a generation calling for a new synthesis of the arts. Then, radical architecture, whose protagonists, in the 1960s, adopted a rebellious and provocative stance in the face of the dehumanisation engendered by rationalism. Next came the iconic projects of Deconstructivist architects, theorising and opening up to newly-developing digital tools in the 1980s. These tools were at the heart of hybrid and interactive architectural practices, presented here to show their biomimetic potential.

Behind the acquisition focuses that have shaped an intangible ideal for the collection, the thread of society’s constantly changing issues can be seen. Each new acquisition creates a new reading, a new sensibility, which disrupts the established narrative. How can we make non-Western voices heard and women’s architecture seen? What form will today’s ecological emergency take in the future? This is a collection that constantly provokes reflection and challenge.



Exhibition view *Horizons in Motion*, 2024
Frac Centre-Val de Loire © Martin Argyroglo

Sculpting Architecture, Inhabiting Art

The “synthesis of the arts” was a utopian project at the heart of modernity from the late 19th century until the 1960s. Seeking to unite major disciplines (painting, sculpture, architecture) and crafts and integrate them into life, this ambition was inseparable from the idea of reforming human beings through their everyday environment. This ideological agenda appeared in various incarnations in Europe, including Arts and Crafts in Britain (1860-1910), Wiener Werkstätte in Austria (1903-1932), De Stijl in the Netherlands (1917-1931) and the Bauhaus in Germany (1919-1933).

During the 1950s, profound transformations on the land connected to the urgent need for reconstruction, fuelled the quest for functionalist architecture. Going against the grain of the modern rationalist space, a number of artists, notably André Bloc and

the Espace Group, called for a new synthesis of the arts through active exchanges between artists and architects. In 1963, Michel Ragon was the first to call this trend “Architecture-sculpture”, breaking with the monotony of large-scale projects and emphasising lyricism and poetry.

Sharing a vision of liberation, creators from a wide range of disciplines came together, from the geometric abstraction of Nicolas Schöffer to the brutalism of Sainte-Bernadette du Banlay, from the biomorphism of Ricardo Porro to the insurrectionary architecture of Chanéac. They challenged form and aspired to create more complex spaces, which embodied and adapted to contemporary needs.



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From One Utopia to Another: Radical Architecture

In 1972, the Italian art critic Germano Celant coined the term “radical architecture” to designate a movement of anti-establishment research that was less concerned with the practice of the architectural profession than with a consideration of the basics, the foundations – in a word, the “roots” of architecture. Far from referring to a single movement, this term rather described the experimental and subversive stance being adopted by the younger generation emerging mainly in Europe, but also the USA, from the mid-1960s.

By adopting conceptual or artistic practices, these architects freed themselves from any constructive purpose. Installations, collages, performances, articles in journals now held the status of architectural projects. From the object to the city, social

practices were rethought: the everyday environment was no longer defined technically or functionally, but emotionally, symbolically and poetically. Far from rationalism, which was held responsible for the impoverishment of international design, architects drew on the imagery of science fiction, comic strips and pop art to create utopian projects that were constantly evolving.

Radical architecture was born of a broader cultural impulse in the 1960s and 1970s, reflecting a desire to break free from formal and social constraints that acted as inhibiting structures. In a post-industrial context where the role of the media and consumerist values was being questioned, these projects also echoed a broader intellectual debate that spanned all fields of creativity.



Saâdane Afif, *Le Centre d'art*, 2002
Collection Frac Centre-Val de Loire © Martin Argyroglo



Diller + Scofidio, *The Slow House*, 1991
Collection Frac Centre-Val de Loire © Martin Argyroglo

Shattered Architectures: Deconstruction

1988, New York. The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) organised an exhibition that would become a landmark in contemporary architectural history for decades to come. *Deconstructivist Architecture* brought together a new generation of architects – Coop Himmelb(l)au, Peter Eisenman, Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid, Rem Koolhaas, Daniel Libeskind and Bernard Tschumi – all of whom shared a practice that broke with the dogma of international style, that of a rational form serving a function.

Although it is not possible to speak of an architectural movement or trend in the strict sense of the term, nor to pinpoint a common style for their work, these architects from all over the world shared a desire to highlight the contradictions that were shaking up late-20th century society and culture. Unbalanced, disjointed,

unstable, generating tensions and conflicts, the forms chosen in these projects were rooted in an aesthetic of dislocation.

Referencing philosopher Jacques Derrida and his theory of deconstruction, architecture was seen as a text to be broken down in order to analyse and question its language. The projects thus incorporated notions of space, time and motion. Traditional elements such as the grid or the cube were manipulated to create new, more complex, forms that redefined the discipline's foundational ideas.



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Automated Form Generation and Natural Inspiration in Architecture

Since the late 1980s, the use of digital technology has led to profound changes in architectural practices. Automated calculations and operations have allowed projects to be modified and reconfigured indefinitely through the direct integration of physical, social or cultural data that emerges during the design process. Design and manufacture now converge in this digital workflow, opening the discipline to new forms and materials.

In the early 2000s, Alisa Andrasek experimented directly with materials, using the nascent medium of 3D printing. At Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Neri Oxman sculpted *Raycounting* in light, using the results of calculations based on light rays. Meanwhile, the Ruy Klein duo studied the forms produced by digital simulations inspired by living systems. Buildings, such as the

“bio-architectures” developed by the marcosandmarjan studio, have taken on the potential of living objects.

Automated information processing has enabled the discipline to evolve, particularly through imitating nature. The organic architecture of the 1960s has now been succeeded by biomimicry, which copies the evolutionary principles of living organisms. Hybrid and interactive, architecture is becoming a blueprint for a transdisciplinary approach, combining natural sciences and information sciences. However, in response to these human-made natural forms, a new interest is now emerging in traditional materials and skills, as seen in the work of Santiago Borja, who combines weaving and architecture to recreate a new cosmogony.

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Permanent Gallery of the Frac Centre-Val de Loire Collection

Including works by: Saâdane Afif, Ant Farm, Architecture Principe, Archizoom Associati, BIOTHING (Alisa Andrasek), André Bloc, Santiago Borja, Chanéac, Constant, Hernán Díaz Alonso, Diller + Scofidio, ecoLogic Studio, Peter Eisenman, Günther Feuerstein, Hiromi Fujii, Mathias Goeritz, Zaha Hadid, Angela Hareiter, Aglaia Konrad, Daniel Libeskind, marcosandmarjan, MaterialEcology (Neri Oxman), New-Territories (S/he), OCEAN, OMA (Zoe Zenghelis), ONYX, Open Source Architecture, Ricardo Porro, Ruy Klein, Nicolas Schöffer, Massinissa Selmani, Beniamino Servino, SITE (James Wines), Ettore Sottsass Jr., Bernard Tschumi and Zünd-Up.

