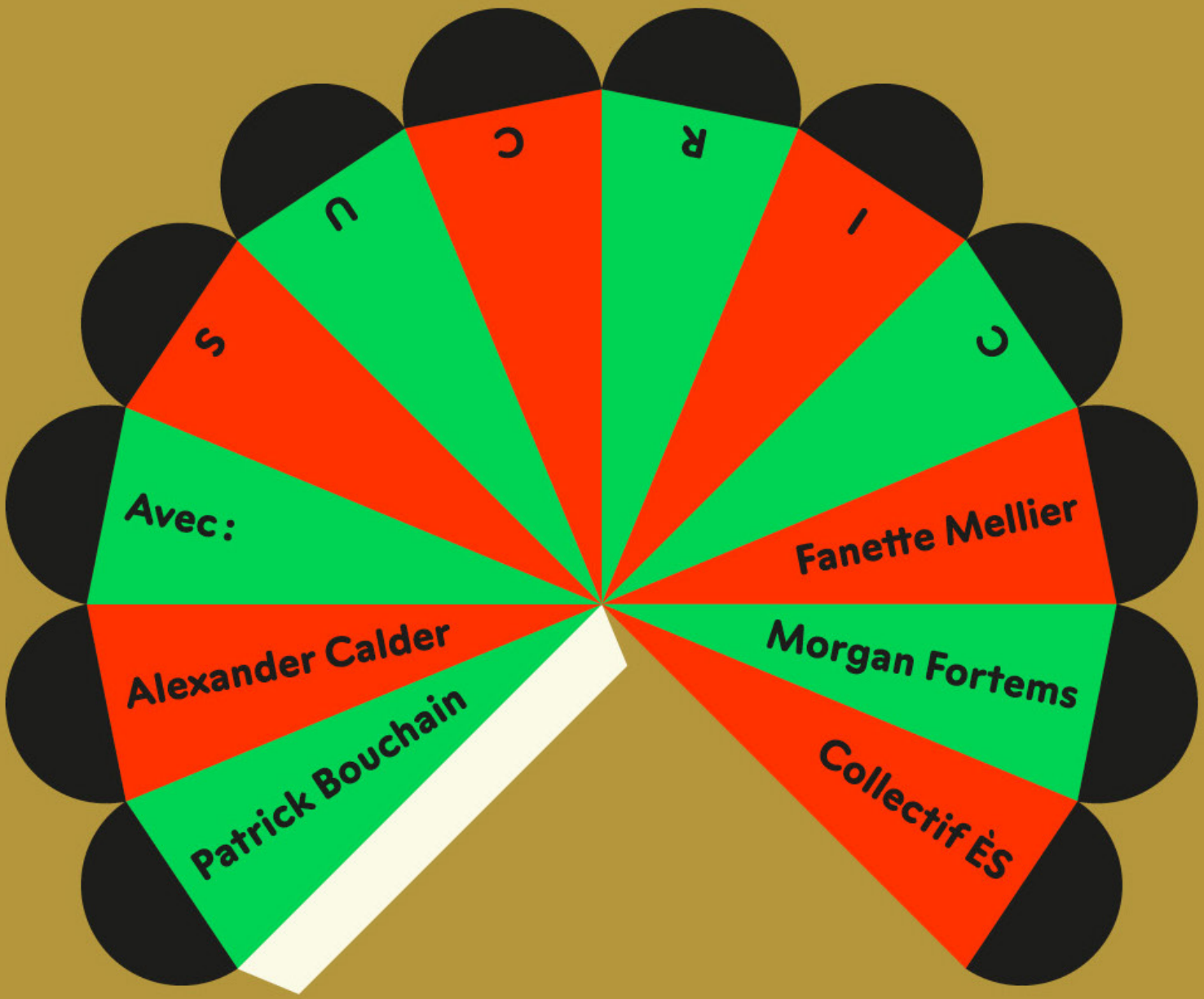
CIRCUS



PRESS KIT

Exhibition from 19 September 2026 to 7 March 2027
Frac Centre-Val de Loire, Orléans

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Patrick Bouchain - Agence Construire, Chapiteau du *Plus Petit Cirque du Monde*, Bagneux, 2012
Courtesy PPCM © Photo Club Bagneux

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CIRCUS

FROM SEPTEMBER 19, 2026 TO MARCH 7, 2027

Patrick Bouchain

Alexander Calder

Collectif ÈS

Morgan Fortems

Fanette Mellier

The exhibition brings together artists, designers and architects inspired by circus. Conceived as a space for dialogue between disciplines, it approaches the circus less as a theme than as a way of creating: building together, setting forms in motion, and exploring balance, space and perception. From architecture to graphic design, from image-making to dance, CIRCUS transforms the exhibition space into a field of experimentation, where works engage in dialogue with one another and invite visitors to move from one world to another.

Visitors will discover a film and photographs related to the *Cirque Calder*, circus and fairground architectures by Patrick Bouchain from the Frac Centre-Val de Loire collection, a typographic journey by Fanette Mellier, a light, joyful and airy scenography by Morgan Fortems, and finally, a shared dance performance by Collectif ÈS.

And because, as in the circus, nothing is achieved alone, a series of workshops, talks and cultural events will accompany the exhibition until its closing in March 2027.

Enjoy your visit!

Christelle Kirchstetter
Director of the Frac Centre-Val de Loire
Exhibition curator

CIRCUS is presented as part of the "AR(t]CHIPEL – Calder at the Heart of France" festival, taking place across fifteen venues throughout the region and organised by Région Centre-Val de Loire in partnership with the Centre Pompidou.



Exhibition viewn *CIRCUS*, Frac Centre-Val de Loire, 2026 © Martin Argyroglo

Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to introduce the Cirque Calder!

Alexander Calder (1898 - 1976)

Wire, corks, scraps of fabric and a few pieces of string. In Alexander Calder's hands, these everyday materials became a world in motion. Acrobats, clowns, animal trainers and animals were brought to life in his miniature circus, which fit into just a few suitcases and could be set up anywhere. All it took was an improvised circus ring, a few benches and an audience.

Calder began designing the *Cirque Calder* in 1926 in his modest Parisian studio; the result was far more than a collection of articulated figurines. It was a seminal work that occupied a very special place in his career as a sculptor. Initially devised as a form of entertainment, the Circus became a laboratory of forms where the principles that would underpin all his work took shape: movement, balance, tension, the interplay with gravity, and the animation of sculpture. This experimentation went on to influence the development of his future *Mobiles*.

The *Cirque Calder* is also regarded as one of the earliest examples of performance art. Featuring around twenty acts and more than 200 characters and props, the artwork, conceived as a show, only comes fully to life when it is set in motion. The performances were a resounding success on both sides of the Atlantic; the Circus quickly became Calder's calling card in the Parisian art scene of the interwar period.

Presenting the *Cirque Calder* in the context of Patrick Bouchain's work brings its architecture to the forefront. An architecture beyond the monument, made of modest materials, lightweight structures and gestures.

Transported in a few suitcases, assembled and dismantled as and when performances required, the Circus prioritised an economy of means, reuse and the collective experience over permanence. This conception of space resonates with the circus tents designed by Bouchain, where architecture is defined above all by the uses it enables.



Exhibition view *CIRCUS*, Frac Centre-Val de Loire, 2026 © Calder Photo : Martin Argyroglo

Circuses and fairground architecture

Patrick Bouchain (1945 -)
Collection Frac Centre-Val de Loire

The ***CIRCUS*** exhibition, drawn from the archives donated by Patrick Bouchain to the Frac Centre-Val de Loire in 2016, brings together twelve projects designed for the world of the circus or which borrow certain ways of constructing, creating and inhabiting spaces from that world.

From the *Théâtre Zingaro* to the *Channel*, the *Académie Fratellini* and the *Mobile Centre Pompidou*, these canvas, wood and metal tents were designed to host the circus and performing arts, but some also housed masterpieces of art history, or even schoolchildren from a city experiencing rapid population growth.
Whether the commission came from artists, as in the case of the *Volière Dromesko* or the *Théâtre du Centaure*, from a local council, as with the *École Foraine* in Saint-Jacques-de-la-Lande, from cultural institutions or even from the local residents, with *Le Plus Petit Cirque du Monde*, it would always respond to a unique context and situation, embodied through a wide range of architectural forms and layouts.

"Who are we building for?" – rather than "What are we building?" – is the question that guided each of the projects presented here.
For nearly forty years, Patrick Bouchain continually pushed the boundaries of his discipline. He would focus on the ways in which places are used and appropriated rather than on their form, and created situations in which craftspeople, artists, students, neighbours and clients worked together to create constantly evolving spaces capable of accommodating both people and animals. These spaces also share a common focus on what already exists, on mobility, on the temporary, which sometimes becomes permanent, on economy of means, and on craftsmanship.

Alongside the models, drawings and photographs on display in the exhibition, the archives reveal not only the structures, whether completed or not, but also the discussions, negotiations, collaborations and even the celebrations that made up the design and construction phase of each project.

Just like in the circus, nothing is done alone, and the exhibition also bears witness to the history of an approach that Bouchain passed on to the young architects with whom he collaborated, notably at the agency Construire, and who today reinterpret, question and reinvent it in their own projects.
For Patrick Bouchain, the circus became a method for conceptualising and practising a form of architecture that he described as "fairground". One that is vibrant, shared and in constant motion.



Exhibition view *CIRCUS*, Frac Centre-Val de Loire, 2026 © Martin Argyroglo

Circus

Fanette Mellier (1977 -)

Fanette Mellier is a French graphic designer who graduated from the École des Arts Décoratifs de Strasbourg in 2000. She has developed a practice at the intersection between graphic design and artistic experimentation, through books, posters, objects, installations and projects in the public space. Her research mainly focuses on typography, colour, printing techniques and the relationship between signs and their environment. A Villa Medici resident in 2012-2013, she undertakes personal projects and collaborates with writers, musicians and set designers.

For the **CIRCUS** project, presented on the walls of the Frac, Fanette Mellier returns to her installation Circus, created in 2008 for the Chaumont International Biennial of Graphic Design. Using a short text by Laure Limongi, she created a journey of reading throughout the city as part of the Biennial, with each word spread out on posters hung up in the public space. Composed of a typographic framework and colourful geometric forms, the letters – one per poster – are revealed as the viewer moves further away, thus entering into dialogue with the urban landscape and architecture.

At Frac Centre-Val de Loire, *Circus* unfolds in areas of traffic, where signs and letters orient visitors between the various galleries in the exhibition, while progressively drawing them into the joyful world of the circus.



« CIRCUS », typographical installation, Fanette Mellier, exhibition *CIRCUS*, Frac Centre-Val de Loire, 2026 © Martin Argyroglo



« Jour de fête », typographical installation, Fanette Mellier, exhibition *CIRCUS*, Frac Centre-Val de Loire, 2026 © Martin Argyroglo

I can't, I'm Joining the Circus !

Collectif ÈS



© Julie Glassberg

Collectif ÈS, led by Sidonie Duret, Jérémy Martinez and Émilie Szikora, took the helm of the Centre Chorégraphique National d'Orléans in 2025, developing an artistic and cultural project rooted in the collective.
ÈS is a preposition that means "in the field of". It is always followed by a plural form and thus implies multiplicity, reflecting what the trio seeks in the idea of the collective.
The creative process is seen as a shared manufactory to propose objects that come from us, cultivating joy and bringing together the history of contemporary dance with each of our personal stories.

For the **CIRCUS** exhibition, their aim is to develop a project that reflects their convictions: joyful, physical, community-minded and citizen-oriented.

Les Turbulences is an ideal space to experience these precious concepts of otherness, collective momentum and coming together. The trio is working with 12 to 13-year-old students from Alice and Jean Pelletier Middle School, as part of the Les Blossières Jumelage Quartier de Culture project, for the project *J'peux pas, j'ai Circus !* (*I Can't, I'm Joining the Circus!*). Drawing on the world of the exhibition, the youths will compose their own choreographic score. With the artists' guidance, they become true "dance masters". At the public performance, the troop will make the Frac a place to come together, dance and celebrate!

Event : J'peux pas, j'ai Circus ! (I can't, I'm joining the Circus !)
Saturday, December 19 at 4 pm
Informations on www.frac-centre.fr

Jumelage Quartier de culture Blossières
Frac Centre-Val de Loire

And We're Off!

Morgan Fortems

After studying architecture, ecology and multimedia, Morgan Fortems has gone on to work mainly as an exhibition designer, graphic designer and artistic director. Alongside his professional and artistic activities, he is constantly engaged in collaborative projects that support dissemination and contemporary creation. He has taken part in reflection groups, organised many events and handles the daily coordination of My Monkey, a gallery and shared creative space that he founded in 2003. He also runs a research workshop called *Réparer La Ville* (*Repairing the City*) at the École Nationale Supérieure d'Art et de Design de Nancy.

In 2025, at Frac Centre-Val de Loire, Morgan Fortems accepted the challenge of creating a 100% reused set, for the exhibition titled *Des villes pour vivre, Yona Friedman* (*Towns for the Living, Yona Friedman*).

This time, for the **CIRCUS** exhibition, he has drawn from all the stocks of materials in storage, along with the display elements at his disposal, to present the models, drawings and archives of circus projects designed by Patrick Bouchain. The bases, made from untreated timber battens, are the only pieces to be produced new for the exhibition: designed with an eco-responsible approach, they themselves will be reused after the exhibition. Once again, the exhibition design resonates with the values and methods that guided the projects on display.



Exhibition view *Towns for the Living, Yona Friedman*, Frac Centre-Val de Loire, 2025 Photo : Martin Argyroglo © ADAGP, Paris, 2026



Exhibition view *CIRCUS*, Frac Centre-Val de Loire, 2026 © Martin Argyroglo

CIRCUS

September 19, 2026 → March 7, 2027
Curator: Christelle Kirchstetter assisted by Nelly Perrier de la Bâthie and Justine Tricoche-Pellegrino
Exhibition design: Morgan Fortems
Graphic design: Fanette Mellier
Lighting: Tiphaine Monroty

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Christelle Kirchstetter, Director
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CIRCUS is presented as part of the "AR(t]CHIPEL – Calder at the Heart of France" festival, taking place across fifteen venues throughout the region and organised by Région Centre-Val de Loire in partnership with the Centre Pompidou.

The Frac Centre-Val de Loire extends its heartfelt thank to
Patrick Bouchain, Fanette Mellier, Collectif ÈS, Morgan Fortemsand all the artists, architects and designers who contributed to the creation of this exhibition and the projects presented within it.

The Frac Centre-Val de Loire would like to thank its partners

French State
Hugues Moutouh,
Prefect of Région Centre-Val de Loire,
Prefect of the Loiret

Région Centre-Val de Loire
François Bonneau, President
Delphine Benassy, Vice-president for Culture and International Cooperation

Institutions involved in the development of the Frac's programme
The Région Centre-Val de Loire / Festival AR(t]CHIPEL and CCNO - Orléans National Choreographic Centre
As well as the partners of the Jumelage Quartier de Culture project carried out in collaboration with the Blossières neighbourhood in Orléans.

ART AND ARCHITECTURE
IN THE CENTRE-VAL DE LOIRE REGION

© Fanette Mellier

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From 2 pm to 7 pm

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