Manuelle Gautrand
Architecture

Origami Building
Paris, France

This office building stands on avenue Friedland, in the immediate vicinity of the Arc de Triomphe and Place de l’Etoile, in a luxurious Parisian neighborhood.

The project was implemented in two parts: the main building on a 20-meter-wide stripe on the avenue, and an extension in the rear, between two courtyard gardens. At the ground floor level, the lobby plays on transparency between the street front and the main garden. The building in the rear of the lot is more private, and it is here that the committee and meeting rooms are laid out, with garden space on both sides.

The unusual location of the site led us to design a project that would embrace and take advantage of the view and immerse into the natural light. An emblematic showcase of the building – the main façade is mostly glass, partially covered with a second skin of screen-printed marble pattern.

The rendered effect is a tremendous origami and the view of this delicate folded marble can be enjoyed both from exterior and interior of the building.

The panels are composite, a film of marble mounted on a twin layer of glass. The symmetrical panels that are folded and assembled by two form an "open-book" pattern and thus highlight the design of the veins of the marble.

This second skin is translucent and acts as a breast wall to ensure privacy as well as to daylight, creating a soft interior atmosphere.

Marble folds create a vibration along the 30-meter-long front. At both ends, in continuity with the façades of neighboring buildings, the origami becomes calmer and falters out. But in the central part, it forms a delicate bas-relief.

The project then develops into the depth of the site with the same objective of clarity and light, adding a strong presence of plants. The offices covered with large lawns with a rich vegetation of two courtyard gardens.

The lobby functions as a meeting point of these two atmospheres – the urban and second skin, calmed of the main façade, and the more private and verdant of the other side of the building.

The interior spaces were designed in a contemporary spirit, highlighting the luminous, clean sphere with light colored and soft materials.

Photograph: Vinzent Ferjencik
The facade, with its delicate bas-relief, extends into the depth of the site with the same objective of clarity, aiming to represent plants. The offices are clad with large panels of glass around the central garden.

The building acts as a meeting point of these two atmospheres - the urban and the more intimate side of the facade, and the more private and verdant of the other side of the building. These spaces were designed in a contemporary spirit, highlighting the luminous and translucent, colored and soft materials.

Photographer: Unknown
Manuelle Gautrand
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Lille Museum of Modern,
Contemporary and Outside Art
Villeneuve d’Ascq, France

The programme for this job was to restructure and extend the Musée d’Art Moderne de Lille, which stands in a magnificent park at Villeneuve d’Ascq. Designed by Roland Simonet and inaugurated in 1983, the existing buildings have already acquired historic landmark status.

The main aim of the brief was to reconstitute a continuous and fluid museum space, this while adding new galleries in a travelling progression to the existing galleries, to house a superb collection of Art brut works. It also entailed a thorough restructuring of the existing buildings, certain parts of which needed to be redefined. In spite of the heritage monument status of Simonet’s construction, rather than set up at a distance, we immediately opted to seek contact by which the extension would embrace the existing buildings in a supporting movement.

The architecture of the extension wraps around the north and east sides of the existing arrangement in a fan-splay of long, fluid and organic volumes. On one side, the fan ribs stretch in close folds to shelter a café-restaurant that opens to the central patio; on the other, the ribs are more widely spaced to form the five galleries for the Art brut collection.

Our intention was never to compete with Simonet’s design, but to attempt to extend it to achieve our objectives with our own sensibility. Our project leads to the same scales in volumes, and uses the same principles to hug the ground line, but we interpret them freely. Thanks to the space available, while working with the programme constraints we were able to create “a small world apart” in the extension. Its outline, which reminds you of a fan or an open hand, enables careful insertion in the contour lines of the site, so the buildings seem to emerge from the topography.

On the café-restaurant side, the close folds of the extension enable us to redefine the patio to loosen up links from the entrance hall towards the restructured spaces: café-restaurant, bookshop and auditorium. The idea was of course to increase the museum’s footfall, but also to re-balance its functions and to infuse new life into certain areas that had become dysfunctional or ill-used in the course of time.

On the other side, the broader folds of the extension house the Art brut galleries. In this part, which is to the east of the existing buildings, all the museum’s galleries are now interlinked, starting with modern art, passing on to contemporary art, and then on to Art brut with interconnected theme galleries and temporary show spaces articulated to the others.

The Art brut galleries maintain a strong link with the surrounding scenery, but they are also purpose-designed to suit the works they house: typical pieces, powerful works that you can’t just glance at in passing. The folds in these galleries make the space less rigid and more organic, so that visitors discover art works in a gradual movement. The architecture is often introverted, to protect art works that are often fragile and that demand toned-down lighting.

At the extremity of the folds – meaning the galleries – a large bay opens magnificently onto the surrounding parkland, adding breathing space to the vast itinerary. These openwork compensate the half-light in the galleries; the openwork screens in front of the café-restaurant with strong light and parkland scenery; a feature that recalls Simonet’s generous luminous moments in the galleries that he designed. Envelopes are sober: smooth untreated concrete with mouldings and openwork screens to protect the bays from too much daylight. The face concrete has a slight colour tint that varies according to intensity of light.
Modern, and Outside Art

The restaurant side, the close folds of the extension enable us to restructure the layout links from the entrance hall towards the restructured spaces: cafe, restaurant, and auditorium. The idea was of course to increase the museum's functions and to re-balance its functions and to infuse new life into certain areas that had become ill-used in the course of time.

The other side, the broader folds of the extension house the Atrium galleries. In this part of the museum, the layout is the east of the existing buildings, all the museum's galleries are now interwoven with modern art, passing on to contemporary art, and then on to Art Nouveau, and finally to the theme galleries and temporary show spaces articulated to the others.

Beneath the galleries maintain a strong link with the surrounding scenery, but they are also designed to suit the works that they house: a functional piece, powerful walls that balance at in peace. The folds in these galleries make the space less rigid and enable the visitors to discover art works in a gradual movement. The architecture is sensitive to protect art works that are often fragile and that demand toned down half-light.

The integrity of the folds – meaning the galleries – a large bay opens magnificently onto the surrounding parkland, adding breathing space to the visit itinerary. These volumes create the half-light in the gallery: the openwork screens in front of the bays intensifying the light and parkland scenery, a feature that recalls Sismondi's generous and open-theatricality of the galleries that he designed. Envelopes are sober: smooth untreated concrete and openwork screens to protect the bays from too much daylight. The concrete has a slight colour tint that varies according to intensity of light.