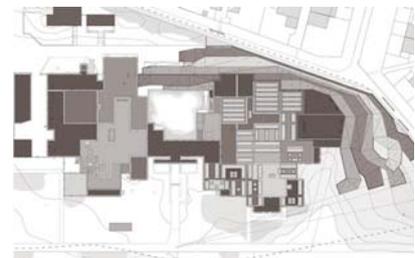
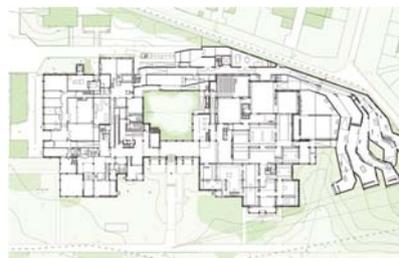
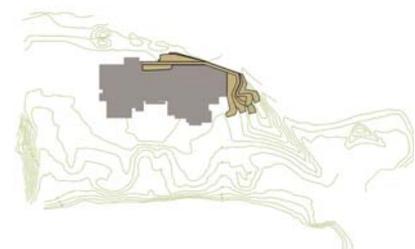
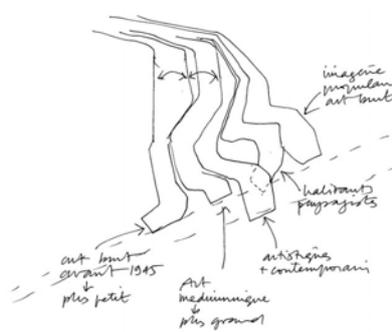
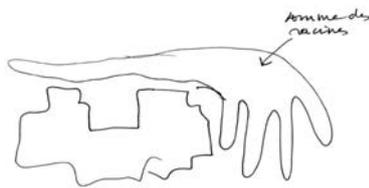


LaM – Lille Museum of Modern extension: reinvented landscape by Manuelle Gautrand Architectes





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Designing an extension to an existing building is always a complex task, especially when one has to tamper with a building with a strong physical and historical presence. Mimicking the original is out of the question, considering the extension plot as a tabula rasa and ignoring the existing building is an expression of denial to the context, urban or historical. The architect needs to grab onto something to begin with. For Manuelle Gautrand, the site itself is the inspiration. She redesigned, or

rather reinvented the landscape, designing a building that follows the contour lines of the site plan and wraps around the existing building.

The proposed extension is a seemingly random sculptural concrete landscape. However, the artificial landscape formation is not without purpose. It reflects the programmatic structure of the building. Function itself shapes the volumes. The arrangement of the exhibition galleries in the triangular area selected as the building plot shapes the volume of the building. The linear arrangement of the galleries is blurred by their superimposition and interweaving, forming an internal landscape that simulates the interior of a white cave, with its surface skin shaping the external volumes of the building. The exits of this cave are blocked by a porous concrete veil, designed to guard the precious interior and offer the visitor a relaxing glimpse of the exterior Arcadian gardens of the museum.

The reconstructed landscape resembles a natural stone formation. Even its texture, an organic pattern embossed in its surface, seems to simulate the physical, non human world, as if the design process was facilitating camouflage strategies. Yet it stands out from the context in its off-white colour and intriguing shape. It realizes its identity as a supplement to the existing building and to the landscape but still makes the difference. In its ambiguity, it makes visiting the museum an intriguing and relaxing experience.

The architect's conception of the project:

THE VIEWPOINT OF THE DESIGNER

Comments by Manuelle Gautrand
Architect for the operation

The programme for this job was to restructure and extend the Musée d'Art Moderne of Lille, which stands in a magnificent park at Villeneuve d'Ascq. Designed by Roland Simounet 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 Simounet'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.

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.

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 Simounet's design, but to attempt to extend it to achieve our objectives with our own sensitivity. Our project keeps 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. (In this respect, Simounet himself was in the habit of talking about 'staying close to the ground line').

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 floor-space, but also to re-balance its functions and to instil 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 inter-linked, starting with modern art, passing on to contemporary art, and then on to Art brut, with interspersed 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 that they house: atypical 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 partly introverted, to protect art works that are often fragile and that demand toned down half-light.

At the extremity of the folds – meaning the galleries – a large bay opens magnificent views onto the surrounding parkland, adding breathing space to the visit itinerary. These views compensate the half-light in the galleries: the openwork screens in front of the bays mediate with strong light and parkland scenery, a feature that recalls Simounet's generous arrangements 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 surface concrete has a slight colour tint that varies according to intensity of light.

ARCHITECT: Manuelle Gautrand Architectes, Paris, France, www.manuelle-gautrand.com¹. CLIENT: Lille Métropole Communauté Urbaine. LOCATION: Allée du Musée, Villeneuve d'Ascq – France. AREA: 11.600 sqm. DATE: 2010. PROJECT MANAGER: Yves Tougard.

FIRMS INVOLVED AT ARCHITECT'S SIDE: Museography : Renaud Pierard, Structures : Khephen Fluids : Alto, Economist : LTA (studies phase) , Guesquière-Dierickx (works phase), Multimedia : Roger Labeyrie, Fire security : Casso. OTHER FIRMS : Refurbishing works of the existing building's façade and roofing: Etienne Sintive, Landscaper : AWP, Roofing / Finishings: Tommasini

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Excerpt: LaM – Lille Museum of Modern, Contemporary & Outsider Art. Refurbishment and extension of the existing modern Art Museum by Manuelle Gautrand Architectes in Allée du Musée, Villeneuve d'Ascq – France. Manuelle Gautrand redesigned, or rather reinvented the landscape, designing a building that follows the contour lines of the site plan and wraps around the existing building.

Links:

1. <http://www.manuelle-gautrand.com/>

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