



PARIS
2000 +

NEW ARCHITECTURE

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**MANUELLE
GAUTRAND**
CITROËN
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When André Citroën first built his car showroom on the Champs-Élysées in the 1920s, the minimalist, rectilinear building, with its giant glass facade, was one of the most advanced structures of its time. In updating it, the image-conscious company wanted to create something equally advanced. Gautrand's new showroom, a commission won in competition in 2001, does not disappoint. It is easily the most daring structure in this area of Paris.

Like the original space, the new building's sculpted facade begins as a glass square in a steel frame. But moving upward, the tall facade takes the form of Renault's famous triangular symbol, the chevron. The glass symbol is lined with bright red film that is more visible inside, since executives were worried about the facade being too splashy. Farther up, the shape begins to deform into diamond shapes that project audaciously from the plane of the facade. It then bends above the building and curves back down the other side. The facade's curves, and its glass and steel fabrication, are meant to echo the design of the company's cars. Along the courtyard, the windows are alternately clear and frosted, allowing glimpses of the surroundings but minimizing interior heat.

Inside, Gautrand has designed what is essentially a large open staircase curving around a central vertical progression of circular steel platforms. The rotating platforms are suspended either from the structure's concrete slabs or from a red steel mast near the back of the space. Display floors are covered with sleek white resin, and sliding glass railings in front of the cars maximize views but protect the merchandise. On the underside of the platforms, three-dimensional arrays of mirrored triangles, an allusion to the tectonic facade, reflect the cars underneath.

Gautrand added several feet to the original height, but strict space regulations required maintaining the same overall square footage. Hence, she created a massive void fronting the stairway and platforms. The void, a function of necessity, gives the space unity and grandeur and allows red light to penetrate from the facade all the way to the stairs on the other side of the space. It also allows cars to be hoisted up to the display platforms on a lift housed in the basement. Citroën's red and white palette is the only color in the minimal interior, whether on tinted red windows, bright red car platforms, or glossy white walls. This structure is tiny compared with massive new showrooms for BMW and Mercedes, but it is an important symbol of French companies' new embrace of architecture to improve image—or in this case, to become the image itself.



