ARTFORUM

Starry Nights

By Nicolas Trembley

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Luma Arles. Photo: Iwan Baan.

SHE WANTED IT to be a lighthouse for the Mediterranean and an archipelago of activities. Maja Hoffmann, the Swiss pharmaceutical heiress and art patron, achieved as much with the Luma Foundation's Parc des Ateliers in Arles, which after thirteen years of development and construction was unveiled to the public at the end of June. For many of us, this was the first major opening after lockdown, with nearly everybody fully vaccinated and ready to start the season in the south of France.

I arrived the day before the press opening and headed first to "Laura Owens & Vincent van Gogh," cocurated by Bice Curiger and Mark Godfrey at the Fondation Vincent van Gogh Arles. All seven van Goghs—including his *Giant Peacock Moth*, painted in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence in 1889 and reimagined by Owens in another room—were displayed on elaborate wallpaper wrapped around the exhibition space and inspired by a little-known Edwardian-era designer named Winifred How, whose drawings Owens first encountered at a flea market. On the roof, Hoffman—who founded the Luma Foundation in 2004, and who serves as president of the Fondation Vincent van Gogh Arles's board of directors (she took over the position after the death of her father in 2014)—gave a thank-you speech, and a light meal was served. Owens was there, in tow with her daughter and gallerist Sadie Coles. The artist spent most of the lockdown in Arles, and even started a residency called Studio of the South in a historical building where artists such as Julie Beaufils, Miriam Laura Leonardi, and Charlotte Houette were invited to paint and customize everything from the floor to the ceiling to the furniture.



Center front: Frank Gehry and his wife, Berta Isabel Aguilera André. Center back: André, Maja Hoffmann, and Mustapha Bouhayati. Photo: © Adrian Deweerdt.

The same night, Luma's preopening artist dinner was organized at Villa Benkemoun, a '70s architectural icon built by Emile Sala on the outskirts of Arles. We ended late at Owens's residence, where artist Melanie Matranga was organizing a queer cineclub culminating in a screening of *But I'm a Cheerleader* (1999) with RuPaul (sadly not in attendance). Matranga has a solo show in an old chapel that Paris's High Art gallery took over this past year, and Sultana, another Parisian gallery allured to the town's new art ecosystem, held a show with Paul Maheke.

On Friday morning, the press conference kicked off inside the new institution's shining symbol: a Frank Gehry–designed tower with an undulating façade loosely based on the dancing cypress tree in van Gogh's *Starry Night.* Partially clad in stainless steel bricks, the edifice projects skyward from a circular base called the Drum, inspired by an ancient Roman amphitheater nearby. Seated beneath a pair of gigantic, corkscrew-shaped slides by Carsten Holler, Hoffmann was surrounded by Gehry himself, Luma Arles CEO Mustapha Bouhayati, and exhibitions director Vassilis Oikonomopoulos. Opening remarks were followed by a new performance by Tino Sehgal called *This element*. Tino's dancers assembled on the ground floor of the tower, where they were joined by Hoffman, her family, and many Luma colleagues, all whooping and droning in an a cappella composition that seemed to respond to the Camargue's wildlife.

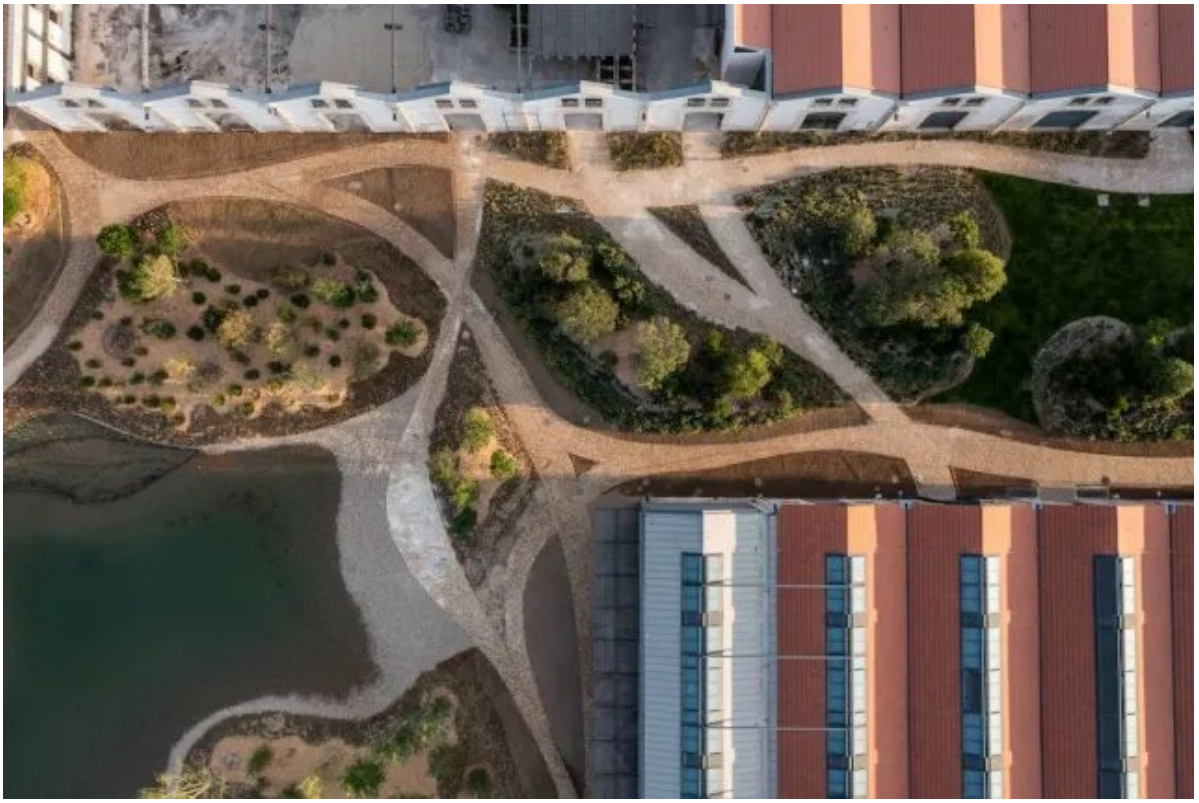


Interior view of Luma Arles. Photo: Iwan Baan.

Hans Ulrich Obrist, on the curatorial team at Luma, took us to the basement to visit the first chapter of a project dedicated to the late Martinican poet and philosopher Édouard Glissant. Obrist told us that Kazuyo Sejima, the Japanese architect who designed the furniture in the exhibition's room, requested a window looking out onto the grounds, where a single tree was planted in front of the seamless glass. I heard that Dominique Gonzalez Foerster conducted a blessing in which she attached white ribbons to the branches in homage to Glissant. Behind the tree is Franz West's *Krauses Gekröse*, 2011, a monumental yet cheerfully grotesque coil of pink intestinal tubes. Obrist recently lent his papers and effects to Living Archives Luma, where artist Arthur Fouray is beginning to sort and catalogue the endless videos, images, books, and, of course, post-its. In the meantime, archive enthusiasts can visit a series, curated by Mathieu Humery, that assembles the materials of Annie Leibovitz, Nan Goldin, Derek Jarman, and *Parkett* magazine, among others.

From "Three Generations: Works from the Emmanuel Hoffman Foundation," culled from the Hoffman's family's holdings in postwar American and European art, to "The Impermanent display," featuring selections from Maja's own collection (including Arthur Jafa, Urs Fischer, and Precious Okoyomon, among others), the exhibitions at the Parc are distinguished by a personal touch. Pride of place is given to Luma's "Core Group" of advisors, among them Philippe Parreno, who produced *Danny*, a permanent installation consisting of footage made from outtakes from his previous films and various algorithm-controlled gizmos like blinds and fountains. Fellow core advisor Liam Gillick devised a communal area in the tower titled *Laguna Gloria*, based on images (here painted on the walls) of his movie *Margin Time 2: The Heavenly Lagoon* (2013). Unfortunately, we could not see *Endodrome*, the virtual reality installation by Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster that premiered in Venice in 2019, as it was not yet ready.

Luma's new twenty-seven-acre campus is quite impressive, and its many exhibition venues alongside Gehry Tower will soon be joined by restaurants, bars, and a hotel. I remember visiting the grounds before the landscape architect Bas Smet designed it: a rail repair yard that looked like a desert. Smet told me how they used the dirt from construction to create hills and dig a pond linked to an old sixteenth-century canal that's still in use.



View of the landscaped Parc designed by Bas Smets. Photo: Iwan Baan.

In the Parc, you can find many old industrial buildings. La Mecanique Generale, a former machine repair shop renovated by architect Annabelle Selldorf, hosted a group show featuring Kapwani Kiwanga, P.Staff, Jakob Kudsk Steensen, and Sophia Al Maria. The latter joined Hoffmann's core group in 2019, along with Paul B. Preciado and Ian Cheng, who is also presenting his new narrative video game *Life after BOB* in an old foundry aptly named Les Forges. In an erstwhile boiler house now rechristened La Grande Halle, Pierre Huyghe presented *After UUmwelt*. An impressive follow-up to 2019's *UUmwelt*, the site-specific installation features a continuous flow of brain scans and neural network images on LED screens, exhibited alongside a cancer cell incubator and real ant colonies.

Suddenly famished, we all stopped for lunch and vegan ice creams in the middle of the Parc, where chef Armand Arnal of Arles's famous La Chassagnette restaurant handed out delicious little picnic baskets. Beatrix Ruf, also a core member, and the legendary Peter Saville joined. The site has many boîtes, like the Drum café designed by Rirkrit Tiravanija in the tower's rotunda. Kerstin Brätsch created a special mosaic floor for another café, this one linked to the new Hotel du Parc situated onsite and designed by Anne Igou, the previous owner of Arles's Nord-Pinus hotel, where Picasso and Jim Harrison used to stay, and which overlooks the spot immortalized in van Gogh's *Café Terrace at Night*.

I couldn't stay longer for the official opening the day after, and also missed the special luncheon honoring Gehry as well as the reveal of OooOoO, a glow-in-the-dark skate park created by Koo Jeong A. In a few days, Arles would open its famous Rencontres d'Arles photo festival, the occasion for French Minister of Culture, Roselyne Bachelot, to alight on Luma to laurel Maja Hoffmann with the Commandeur des Arts et des Lettres. Well deserved.



Bas Smets. All photos by author unless noted.



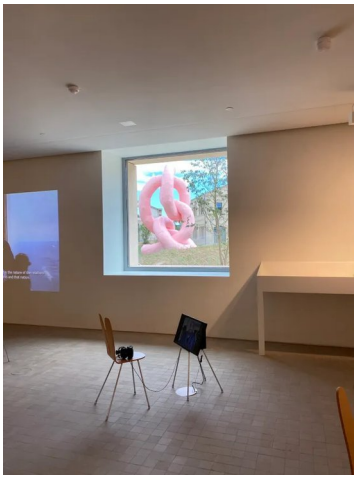
Bice Curiger and Willem van Gogh.



Carsten Holler.



Café scene.



At Hans Ulrich Obrist's project.



Vincent van Gogh's *Giant Peacock Moth*, 1889.



Inside Luma.



Curator Julie Boukobza.



Martino Gamper.



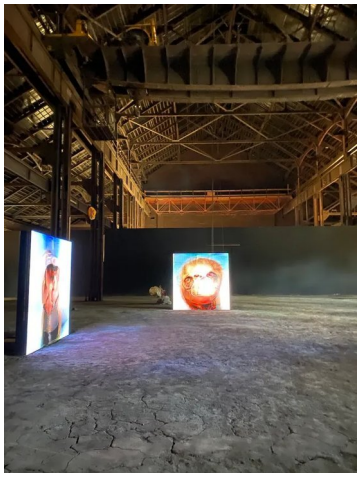
Matthieu Humery.



Hans Ulrich Obrist and Arthur Fouray.



Philippe Parreno and Pierre Huyghe in Parreno's installation.



Pierre Huyghe's installation.



Rirkrit Tiravanija.



Beatrix Ruf, Piper Marshall, Liam Gillick, Peter Saville, and Anna Blessmann.



At a Tino Sehgal performance.



Luma Arles.

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