

Press release
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 galerie
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du design
cité du design saint-étienne

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7.3.27



design en main

du langage à l'objet

Design en main. Du langage à l'objet

(Design in Hand. From Language to Object)

Exhibition at the Galerie nationale du design

Cité du design, Saint-Étienne

From 11.06.2026 to 07.03.2027

Curator

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Scenography

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Centre Pompidou - Musée National d'Art Moderne (MNAM)

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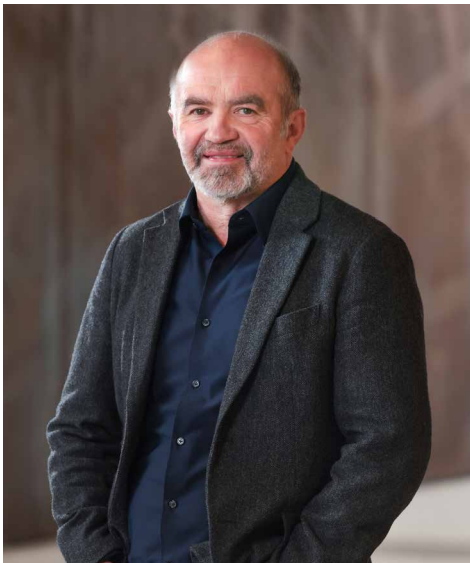


Aurélie Voltz | © Hubert Genouilhac/
PhotUpDesign

“Through the exhibition *Design en main. Du langage à l’objet* by Laurence Mauderli, the Galerie Nationale du Design is able to fulfil its vocation, showcasing the diversity of public design collections and presenting them in a way that speaks volumes. By bringing together major works from many French institutions and putting them on display at the iconic Manufacture d’armes site in a brilliantly restored architectural setting, this inaugural exhibition firms up our ambition to make design a story in motion. This story is both demanding and accessible, where disciplines meet and every creative move is filled with both heritage and a visionary flair.”

Aurélie Voltz

Director of the Galerie Nationale du Design and the MAMC+



Éric Jourdan | © Hubert Genouilhac/
PhotUpDesign

“The opening of the Galerie Nationale du Design is a key forward step for the burgeoning Cité du Design district and the cultural impact Saint-Étienne makes. Now visitors can experience the full gamut of heritage, innovation, and a thoughtful view of today’s world, all within one quarter of the city. By juxtaposing the history of design in Saint-Étienne with international pieces, the inaugural exhibition *Design en main. Du langage à l’objet* reveals what makes Saint-Étienne unique. It is an area where heritage, contemporary creations and projections towards the future intersect, and where local, national and international perspectives intertwine. It is a stimulating environment that is constantly encouraging creators and audiences to imagine, experiment and question design.”

Éric Jourdan

Director General of the EPCC Cité du design-
École Supérieure d’Art et Design de Saint-Étienne
(Ésad Saint-Étienne)

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On 10 June 2026, the Galerie Nationale du Design in Saint-Étienne will open its doors with an original and ambitious inaugural exhibition. Curated by design historian Laurence Mauderli, *Design en main. Du langage à l'objet* (*Design in Hand. From Language to Object*) is a game of mirrors where words illuminate forms, where gestures reveal uses, and where the hand - simultaneously a word, tool, symbol and memory - becomes the key to a story that connects individuals, things and the world.

This exhibition brings together nearly four hundred pieces from various public collections, making it a true design feat. From Saint-Étienne's industrial history to contemporary perspectives, this visual journey through the major changes of the 20th and 21st centuries highlights how things passed from hand to hand carry the memories of past societies while also opening up new paths. Through the legacies, diversions, ruptures and reinventions, we (re)discover constantly evolving design, calling into question our relationship to the world and sketching out the forms of the future.

The exhibition *Design en main. Du langage à l'objet* runs until 7 March 2027 and is emblematic of the new Galerie Nationale du Design. The Galerie is one of a kind in France and each year a guest curator will draw on the wide selection of design pieces from public collections and present a new take on this multi-faceted discipline.

It is housed in a unique space at the heart of the Cité du design quarter, converted from an old arms factory. The site is full of history and symbolism, which inspired the title of the exhibition.

This first exhibition acts as an inaugural gesture, made with a sign of the hand. It is the hand that makes, that passes on, that connects - and that invites the public to cross the threshold in the Galerie Nationale du Design.

the hand, the word, the object

In this inaugural exhibition at the Galerie Nationale du Design, Laurence Mauderli pays homage to the building in which it is happening: the Saint-Étienne Manufacture d'armes (Arms Factory). Starting from the word "manufacture" and its etymology, our curator spins a web from the question of the hand, taking us through the making of language and popular expressions to industrial production. Her idea: to create a connection to the public, not only through objects, but also through words. Her starting point: both an expression and an item of design have a coherence of form and meaning, and each deviates in its own way from established norms. Her ambition: to show that design is both a language and a practice rooted in place and time.

The hand as a common thread

As an organ of the human body, the hand is the instrument par excellence for touch and for doing. It is therefore a tool for knowledge and for action. By choosing six popular expressions that use the word "hand", Laurence Mauderli invites visitors into a game that plays on saying(s) and doing. It is a through-the-looking-glass effect that takes through words and objects - and the exhibition itself.

À mains nues (With bare hands), Mettre la main à la pâte (Lending a hand), Avoir en main (Having in hand), De main en main (From hand to hand), Perdre la main (Losing a steady hand) and Prendre en main (Taking in hand). Just as she explored the origin of these expressions in language, our curator then focuses on the emergence of design in the history of things. She defines expressions as a language of design and explores how they interact with objects, which are themselves a language of design. The expressions chosen to structure this exhibition are like a looking glass through which the visitor will be able to discover and understand the objects on display.

Language and design: two units of form and meaning

For Laurence Mauderli, expressions are a form of linguistic freedom that break from the rules and subvert grammatical and lexical norms. And design does the same. To quote historian Judy Attfield in her book *Wild Things. The Material Culture of Everyday Life* (2000), although it is not distinct from the world of things in general, design can be defined as "things with attitude". These things were created for a specific purpose and convey a message. In the exhibition *Design en main. Du langage à l'objet* Therefore, phrases and designed things are fully aligned in their way of being language.



"The hand occupies a central place in contemporary design, linking traditional and current practices. It represents

an alternative to industrialisation, questions the relationship between manual work and digital technology without limiting itself to craftsmanship, and serves as a bridge between machine and human skills. Thinking about hands is a key topic for design research and contemporary design. In this exhibition, I suggest not just seeing the hand, but listening to it."

Laurence Mauderli
Exhibition Curator



Åbäke, *The Handshake*, 2014-2025 | Coll. Frac Grand Large – Hauts-de-France Collection | © All rights reserved © Leslie Fernandez

A seminal exhibition

By bringing together for the first time several design collections from across France (Centre National des Arts Plastiques, Centre Pompidou, Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain de Saint-Étienne Métropole, Musée des Arts Décoratifs et du Design de Bordeaux, Frac Grand Large – Hauts-de-France, Musée des Arts Décoratifs de Paris, Musée d'Art et d'Industrie de Saint-Étienne, Musée de la Ville de Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, Manufactures Nationales - Sèvres & Mobilier national), the exhibition *Design en main. Du langage à l'objet* brings the Galerie Nationale du Design's project to fruition. Laurence Mauderli has taken nearly 400 objects, emblematic pieces and everyday tools, supplemented

by archives from Saint-Étienne (films, posters and photographs). She takes us through the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries, linking Saint-Étienne's manufacturing past to the international history of design. The exhibition creates a dialogue between these ideas, woven together for the first time in one place to form a new narrative. It also pays tribute to the city in which the Galerie Nationale du Design resides. The exhibition *Design en main. Du langage à l'objet* not only inaugurates the Galerie Nationale du Design, but also gives it a body and a soul. It resonates with all the historical and contemporary energy that has gone into its creation.

An invitation to (re)discover design

Design en main. Du langage à l'objet is neither a chronological or exhaustive history of design. Instead, it takes a focused, critical and subjective take, blending history, technology, linguistics, philosophy, anthropology and societal issues. Through the narrative thread of the hand, Laurence Mauderli provides a vision that is universal yet intimate, exacting yet poetic. It invites us to (re)discover design as a fundamental human practice that is shaped by the challenges of its time. By linking past, present and future, it offers an immersive experience where everyone can grasp the timelessness of design.

Laurence Mauderli

Exhibition Curator

From the outset of this Galerie Nationale du Design project, Laurence Mauderli's name shone out as the obvious choice of the scientific steering committee to curate the inaugural exhibition. Her knowledge of Saint-Étienne, where she teaches the history and theory of design, combined with her recognised European career, gives her a distinctive perspective on the discipline. Laurence Mauderli is attentive to local histories as well as international design flows in her original take that marks the opening of the new museum.



Laurence Mauderli | © Hubert Genouilhac/
PhotUpDesign

Laurence Mauderli is a design historian. She has a doctorate in art and art sciences (University of Toulouse - Jean Jaurès) and an MA in History of Design from the Royal College of Art/Victoria & Albert Museum in London. She was the scientific collaborator and co-curator of the *Designsammlung* at the Museum für Gestaltung in Zurich from 2000 to 2005. She has contributed to numerous design exhibitions, notably at the Victoria & Albert Museum, the Centre Pompidou and the Swiss Cultural Centre in Paris. A lecturer in design history and theory at the École Supérieure d'Art et Design de Saint-Étienne

(Saint-Étienne Higher School of Art and Design) since 2021, she also taught at the ESAD de Reims from 2007 to 2021. Her research, publications and exhibition curating focus on historical and contemporary design and material culture. She is fluent in three languages and is very aware of language, its movements and its forms. By placing this theme at the heart of her research, she has come to nurture her theory on the dialogue between words and objects, building the framework for understanding design that now forms the conceptual basis of this exhibition.



"I have sought, if not the origin, at least the meaning of the six phrases that are the backbone of the exhibition *Design en main. Du langage à l'objet*. The design projects and objects are a formal, material and aesthetic reflection of this. Every expression has its things."

Laurence Mauderli
Exhibition Curator

a design epic in six acts

The exhibition *Design en main. Du langage à l'objet* invites visitors to a six-part immersive journey explaining the creative and symbolic forces within design. Drawing on popular expressions built around the word "hand", Laurence Mauderli has designed a narrative journey that retraces a fascinating aspect of design - how it developed and how it influences and impacts on society. From craftsmanship to industry, from utilitarian objects to forward-looking thinking, this exhibition reveals how design has shaped our world. It is a local yet universal story, rooted in the history of Saint-Étienne while also opening up to major contemporary issues.



Pedro Friedeberg, *Chaise*, 1961 | FNAC 1954, Centre National des Arts Plastiques Collection | © All rights reserved/CNAP © Béatrice Hatala/ Les Arts Décoratifs

With bare hands

Saint-Étienne and the birth of design

The journey begins in Saint-Étienne, in a city shaped by coal, weapons and ribbon. These industries have left a lasting imprint on local mannerisms, know-how and material culture and underpin the unique relationship between hand, matter and object that already foreshadows design.

Through a selection of emblematic objects, photographs from Saint-Étienne native Félix Thiollier (1842-1914) and three visual essays put together by the curator from archive films, this first sequence highlights the dialogue between bare-handed work with raw materials and the emergence of manufactured forms. In revisiting the world fairs of the second half of the 19th century and early 20th century, Laurence Mauderli examines how gestures of craftsmanship transformed into an aesthetic language and shows how working-class, industrial Saint-Étienne contributed to the emergence of France's unique design culture that it now exports around the globe.



Félix Thiollier, *Cheminées d'usine*, second half of the 19th century | Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain de Saint-Étienne Métropole Collection | © Yves Bresson/MAMC+



Grosgrain Ribbon with satin trim, Colcombet François et Cie, circa 1900, Saint-Étienne, | Musée d'Art et d'Industrie de Saint-Étienne Collection | © Hubert Genouilhac/PhotUpDesign



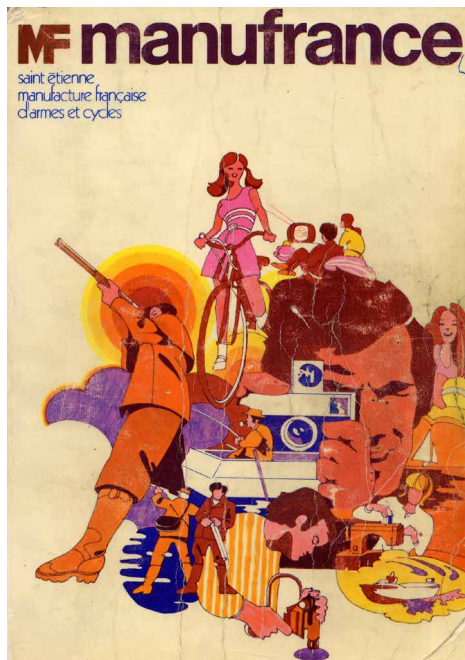
"The *Design en main* exhibition presents a selection of ribbons from the Saint-Étienne textile workshops, produced between 1851 and 1925 (a period spanning the first and last World's Fairs and International Exhibitions). These textile ornaments were made using the Jacquard weaving technique, which relies on the complementary skills between the artisan's hand and the loom."

Laurence Mauderli (excerpt from the catalogue)
Exhibition Curator





Cover of the Manufrance catalogue, 1977 | Saint-Étienne Municipal Libraries Collection | Reproduced with permission from Manufrance



Cover of the Manufrance catalogue, 1972 | Saint-Étienne Municipal Libraries Collection | Reproduced with permission from Manufrance

Lending a hand From industry to consumer society

This second section explores the rise of the consumer society through the catalogues of Saint-Étienne's Manufacture française d'armes et de cycles factory, known as Manufrance catalogues.

As pioneers in France of mail ordering, these "bibles of things" document the golden age of manufacturing in Saint-Étienne and the journey this emblematic company went on from its industrial rise to its closure in 1980. These records of everyday life bear witness to industrial diversification, the standardisation of forms and the emergence of the object as a product of desire. The same model is presented in a multitude of variations for people to compare, choose and appropriate. Serving as both sales distribution tools and key sources for the history of design, the Manufrance catalogues testify to the close link between the company and its customers, their covers displaying inventive graphics intended to attract, win over and retain customers.



"The cover of the 1977 Manufrance catalogue reflects a marketing strategy that highlights the hand as a symbol of the company's expertise, aiming to appeal to a diverse clientele.

Illustrations of hands grasping objects draw attention to the way they are held. Whose hands are these? The consumers for whom the products are intended – even though they also evoke the workers who made them."

Laurence Mauderli (excerpt from the catalogue)
Exhibition Curator



Call for contributions

Curator Laurence Mauderli wanted to involve the residents of Saint-Étienne and Lyon in her project. A call for contributions, in the form of a wanted notice, went out at the end of March 2026, inviting owners of Manufrance items to drop them off so that they be part of the exhibition. Having these objects creates a close relationship with visitors, who become participants in the exhibition by entrusting it with their everyday objects (now recognised as museum pieces!).

↳ citedudesign.com/fr/a/avis-de-recherche-3822

Having in hand

The designer-gatherer,
a figure of the 20th
century

The journey continues into the 20th century around the figure of the "designer-gatherer", a concept developed by Laurence Mauderli to describe designers who appropriate objects from material culture to reinvent them.

Creators like Bruno Munari, Gae Aulenti, the Castiglioni brothers and Jasper Morrison observe, collect, accumulate and repurpose everyday technical objects to reveal their design potential. The hand is no longer merely an operator - it chooses, assembles and interprets. It transforms ordinary objects into icons. Their iconic pieces show how the technical becomes poetry and how design reconfigures our relationship to objects and to the world. The "objects wallpaper", specially designed for the exhibition by Ulysse Bouët, extends the visitor's viewpoint and showcases this contemporary "objectology".



Bruno Munari, *Forchette parlanti*, 1958 | Purchased thanks to the Friends of the Centre Pompidou, Groupe d'Acquisition pour le Design, 2016, Centre Pompidou, Paris, Musée National d'Art Moderne | © Bruno Munari. Courtesy of Corraini Edizioni © Centre Pompidou, MNAM/ Georges Meguerditchian/Dist. GrandPalaisRmn



Gae Aulenti, *Table Tour*, 1993 | Donated by Fontana Arte in 2009, Centre Pompidou, Paris, Musée National d'Art Moderne | © Gae Aulenti © Centre Pompidou, MNAM/Philippe Migeat/ Dist. GrandPalaisRmn



"Italian architect and designer Gae Aulenti graduated from Politecnico di Milano in 1953. Her approach to industrial design was closely linked to her work as a set designer and architect for opera, theatre and museums - notably the rehabilitation of the Gare d'Orsay during its transformation into a museum. [...] Through citation, Gae Aulenti repurposed existing objects, giving them new value by changing their context. With *Table Tour*, both the context and usage evolved: the bicycle wheels and forks facilitated the table's movement, revealing the functional ingenuity of this repurposing."

Lola Carrel (excerpt from the catalogue)

In charge of design exhibitions and publications at MAMC+



Ron Arad, *Anonymous Stool*, 1994 | Donated by Zeus in 2009, Centre Pompidou, Paris, Musée National d'Art Moderne | © Ron Arad & Associates Ltd © Centre Pompidou, MNAM/Georges Meguerditchian/Dist. GrandPalaisRmn



"The encounter between Zeus and Ron Arad dates back to the mid-1980s, in the showroom of this new Milanese design house that offered 'minimalist, black, and chic furniture'. The first project was the swivel bar stool *Hotel Zeus Stool* (1992). *Anonimous Stool* followed. In spite of its name, the piece is anything but anonymous, as it bears Ron Arad's signature. With this seat, he proves once again his mastery of materials (steel, aluminium and alder wood) and his ability to transform an archetypal object, the swivel architect's stool, into a piece that is both familiar and refined."

Laurence Mauderli (excerpt from the catalogue)
Exhibition Curator

From hand to hand

When design
transcends eras

Echoing the work of prehistorian and ethnologist André Leroi-Gourhan, this section explores the continuity of forms through time and provides something close to the genetics of design.

Everyday objects - knives, containers, lamps or seats - remind us of the permanence of their uses and fundamental needs they serve. From hand to hand, from era to era, design classifications evolve without disappearing, forming part of a collective memory that ensures the forms live on. Design can be understood as a process of refining technical and malleable language, capable of combining tradition and modernity and ensuring the sustainability of things, like the *Anonymous Stool* by Ron Arad, which embodies this reinterpreted continuity.

Losing a steady hand

Modernity and the decline in physical gestures

The fifth section of the exhibition examines technological modernity and the growing role of machines in our daily lives.

Through a wide range of household appliances from post-war Europe and the United States, this section shows how kitchen mixers, motorised tools and electrical devices gradually relegated the hand to a mere activation tool.

Gestures becomes less frequent, manufacturing disappears and the action is delegated to the machine, profoundly transforming the relationship between individual and object. Against this backdrop, the integrated industrial designer emerges, a central figure in large companies such as Moulinex, SEB and Braun.

The section also questions in a tongue-in-cheek way the sometimes illusory promises of consumer society and the pitfalls of turning our backs on DIY. The video *Angèle Dust et les machines* (Serial Cleaners, 2000), made for the *Les bons génies de la vie domestique* exhibition (Centre Pompidou, 2000-2001) illustrates how the systematic use of the machine can lead to a form of alienation. The video is being shown again especially for this exhibition.



Gilles Rozé, *Technès* food chopper, 1977, Groupe Seb | Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain de Saint-Étienne Métropole Collection | © All rights reserved



F. Chery, coffee grinder 926, 1967, Peugeot Frères | Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain de Saint-Étienne Métropole Collection | © F. Chery



“Founded in 1944, the Société d’emboutissage de Bourgogne (SEB) became an iconic brand in French household appliances. [...] In 1977, the electric meat grinder designed by French designer Gilles Rozé and Sofa Praxis could ‘quickly and finely’ chop garlic, onions, and herbs vertically, breaking with the traditional method of chopping on a board with a knife. At a time when paid work was becoming increasingly feminised, women were particularly receptive to the promises of time savings and reduced effort offered by these new appliances, as highlighted in advertisements.”

Joris Thomas (excerpt from the catalogue)

Head of the design appreciation department at MAMC+

Taking in hand

Design in the face of current challenges

The final section opens the perspective out to the designs of tomorrow, in which the question of the hand is again central.

Faced with contemporary challenges (scarcity of resources, moves to reduce consumption, ecological awareness), this section looks at past and recent projects and objects that question industrial standardisation, value natural resources and local know-how, and redefine the processes of making something.

Designers such as Studio Unfold, Lucile Viaud or Fernando Laposse are rethinking their practice by reconnecting with the material and developing resilient forms that carry meaning and durability. *Taking in hand* is an act of emancipation, preservation and reinvention, opening renewed ways of thinking and doing design.



Enzo Mari, *Ecolo* vase, 1992-1995, vases in a set | Donated by Alessi in 2011, Centre Pompidou, Paris, Musée National d'Art Moderne | © Enzo Mari © Centre Pompidou, MNAM/Georges Meguerditchian/Dist. GrandPalaisRmn



"From the 1970s onwards, Italian designer and theorist Enzo Mari was a pioneer of do it yourself, advocating for the revaluation of manual labour. In 1974, his Milan exhibition entitled *Proposta per autoprogettazione* (Proposal for Self-Design) showcased a collection of furniture designed using simple assemblies and tools, the plans for which were provided free of charge to visitors. [...] In 1992, this project underwent a variation with *Ecolo*. Enzo Mari designed a booklet for the Italian company Alessi, specialising in tableware and kitchenware. The booklet contained simple drawings offering solutions for transforming household containers and plastic bottles into vases."

Joris Thomas (excerpt from the catalogue)

Head of the design appreciation department at MAMC+

a tour de France of design collections

For this first exhibition at the Galerie Nationale du Design, Laurence Mauderli has brought together works from about ten major museums in France. These pieces, both historical and contemporary, illustrate the diversity and richness of design, from the utilitarian to the experimental. To complete this overview, she also approached some contemporary design studios and selected archive documents filled with accounts from the time, reinforcing the exhibition's historical perspective.

Centre National des Arts Plastiques (CNAP)

1982



Studio Formafantasma, *Botanica 6* vase, 2011 | FNAC 2015-0065 (1 and 2), Centre National des Arts Plastiques | © Studio Formafantasma/CNAP © Yves Chenot

As a central public institution for the visual arts, CNAP plays a key role in the vitality of the French artistic scene. On behalf of the State, it conserves and enriches the national collection, enhancing it further through loans arrangements within France

and abroad. Its design collection holds nearly 12,000 works from more than 2,200 French and international designers. Spanning a huge range of different periods, countries, production methods and practices, it reflects the vitality and plurality of contemporary design. The CNAP is a founding member of the Galerie Nationale du Design. and it is in this capacity that it provides its collection and expertise to the curators and supports the Gallery's facilitation work.

Centre Pompidou - Musée National d'Art Moderne (MNAM)

1977

Since 1977, the Centre Pompidou has consistently been a vibrant and committed cultural hub open to the world. 2025 saw the start of a massive transformation of the venue, which will allow it to continue activity throughout the renovation work. During this renovation, the "Constellation" plan is in force in Paris, across France and internationally to maintain the Pompidou's reach. The Centre Pompidou's design

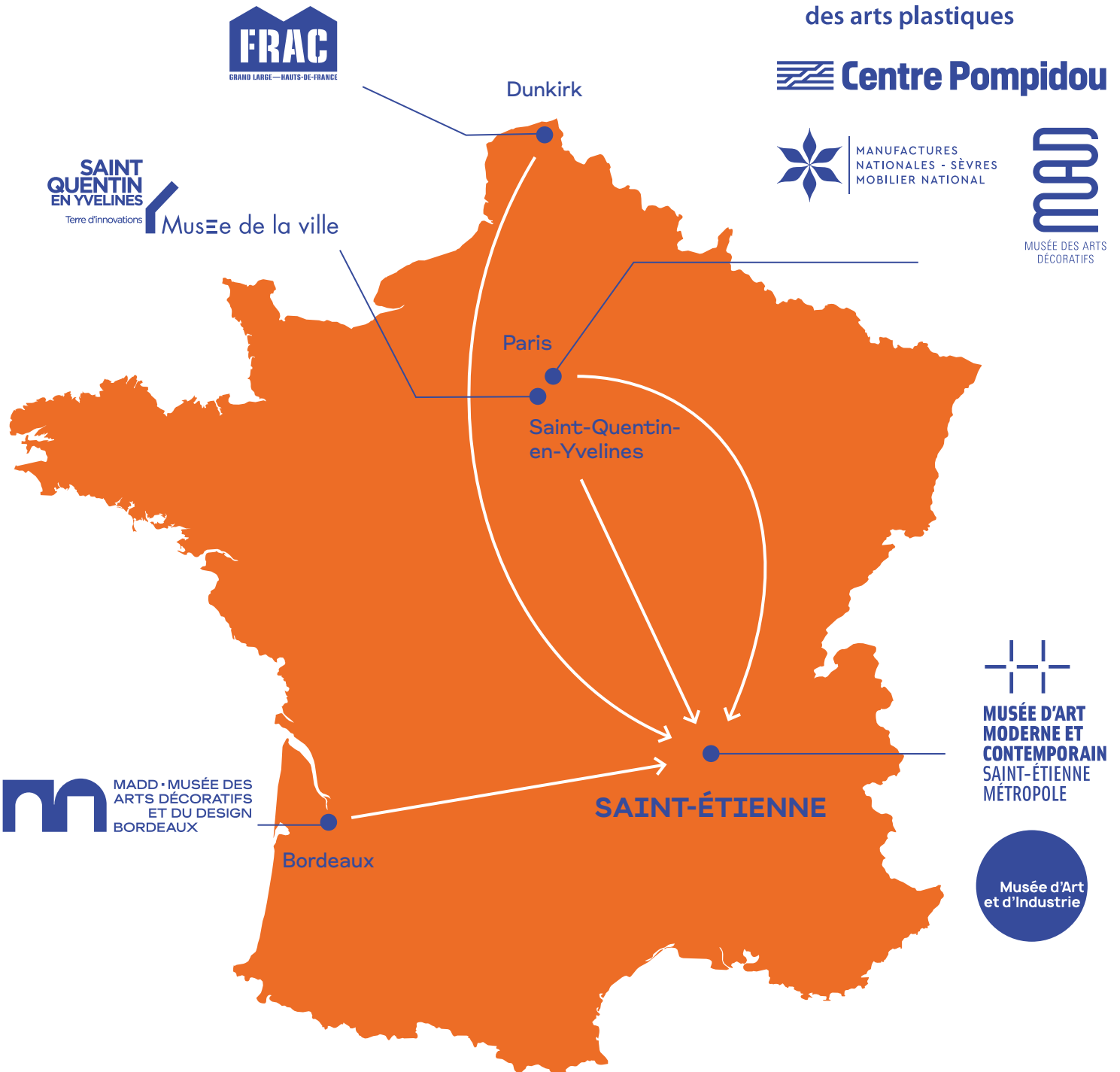
collection comprises some 10,000 works, by nearly 900 designers, spanning a period from the early 20th century to the present day, charting the course of the creators who have shaped the history of modernity. It is therefore only natural that the Centre Pompidou should be involved in the opening of the Galerie Nationale du Design in Saint-Étienne, as an outstanding partner, alongside other major cultural institutions.



Michele De Lucchi, *Treforchette* lamp, 1997 | Donated by the artist in 2004, Centre Pompidou, Paris, Musée National d'Art Moderne | © Michele De Lucchi © Centre Pompidou, MNAM/Bertrand Prévost/Dist. GrandPalaisRmn

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Design en main. Du langage à l'objet
Exhibition at the Galerie Nationale du Design
From 11 June 2026 to 7 March 2027



Saint-Étienne
Ville créative design
Loire
LE DÉPARTEMENT

To illustrate this epic tale of design and its local roots, Laurence Mauderli also turned to the archive collections around the Saint-Étienne region. She approached the Loire Département Archives, the Saint-Étienne Cinematheque and the Saint-Étienne Municipal Libraries for graphic designs, photographs and audiovisual documents relating to the industrial history of the region.

Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain de Saint-Étienne Métropole (MAMC+)

1987

In 1987, the MAMC+ was the first museum of modern art to be created outside of Paris. The design collection, first established when the museum was created, comprises more than 2,000 objects as well as 600 drawings and models. In a nod to the city's history, its hallmark is industrial design and objects designed for mass production. It houses four designers' collections: Michel Mortier, René-Jean Caillette, Studio Totem and Savinel & Rozé. The *Design en main* exhibition showcases the rich collection of household appliances from the MAMC+. One of the main ways this collection grew is through donations, often motivated by people discovering everyday objects they had seen in the museum. Co-sponsor of the Galerie Nationale du Design with the EPCC Cité du design-Ésad Saint-Étienne, the MAMC+ is responsible for the scientific programme and producing the exhibitions.



Don E. Grove, Jackson Comstock, *Hollywood Liquefier Model 48* blender, circa 1948 | Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain de Saint-Étienne Métropole Collection | © All rights reserved

Musée d'Art et d'Industrie de Saint-Étienne (MAI)

1833



Sample book of gauze ribbons, registered by the Buisson company with the trade authority in 1851 | Musée d'Art et d'Industrie de Saint-Étienne Collection

The musée d'Art et d'Industrie is conserving the heritage of the industrial activity in Saint-Étienne and the surrounding region. The collections on the arms, cycling and ribbon industries bring together many pieces that are one of a kind. This museum also houses a collection of decorative and fine arts showcasing a wide range of decoration and technique. As it is currently redesigning its permanent exhibition, which shows how art and industry interact and influence each other in the creation of design, it seemed only natural that the Galerie Nationale du Design would exhibit some pieces from its collections.

Musée des Arts Décoratifs de Paris

1864



Adolf Loos, *Loos set*, made by J. & L. Lobmeyr, Vienna (Austria), circa 1830 | Paris, Les Arts Décoratifs, Musée des Arts Décoratifs | © Paris, Les Arts Décoratifs/Jean Tholance. All rights reserved

Formerly known as the Union centrale des arts décoratifs, the Musée des Arts écoratifs houses one of the world's largest collections of decorative art (1.5 million pieces). This eclectic, international collection spans the Middle Ages to the present day, covering a wide variety of fields: furniture, tableware, fashion and textiles, jewellery, wallpaper, ceramics and glass, toys, adverts, drawings and photographs. Since the late 1960s, the museum has played a key role in promoting design as both a way of thinking and a form of creation. The museum's loans for the *Design en main. Du langage à l'objet* exhibition are emblematic of its collections' diverse range and rich history.

Musée des Arts Décoratifs et du Design de Bordeaux (MADD)

1955



Gae Aulenti, *Minibox* lamp, 1981 | Musée des Arts Décoratifs et du Design de Bordeaux Collection | © MADD Bordeaux/L. Gauthier

Located in the heart of Bordeaux, the MADD will reopen its doors in April 2026 after three years of renovation and modernisation. Its collections bring together nearly 33,000 works from the Middle Ages to the present day. Bearing witness to the production of decorative arts and design in the West, they illustrate typologies as diverse as tableware, furniture and weapons, whilst also including items with new uses. The pieces selected for the *Design en main* exhibition reflect two major acquisition trends since 2013: 1980s design with

the *Minibox* lamp by Gae Aulenti, and tableware with the sushi set by Stefano Giovannoni for Alessi, the coloured glasses by Finnish designers Kaj Franck and Timo Sarpaneva, or the *Smoke* glasses by the Italian Joe Colombo. As a member of the Galerie Nationale du Design scientific steering committee, the MADD is a resource institution, but also as a co-constructor in a joint project uniting museums.

Frac Grand Large – Hauts-de-France 1982



Pier Giacomo Castiglioni, Achille Castiglioni, *siege Sella*, 1957, ed. Zanotta | Frac Grand Large – Hauts-de-France Collection, 1985 | © Pier Giacomo Castiglioni © Fondazione Achille Castiglioni © Muriel Anssens

With a vast photography and installations collection, the Frac Grand Large – Hauts de France is the only regional contemporary art collection to acquire a design line. This internationally recognised collection of European design icons from the 1960s to today shows off a keen awareness of the social, economic and ecological context we live in. The FRAC Grand Large – Hauts-de-France is one of the earliest partners of the Galerie Nationale du Design.

The *Design en main* exhibition presents works acquired at different times, which testify to the ingenuity in recycling forms the Castiglioni brothers and Piero Gilardi showed, and to the imagination on display in more narrative design by Matali Crasset and Åbäke, whose Japanese lacquer screen also highlights excellent craftsmanship.

Musée de la Ville de Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines 1977

Established in 1977 at the same time as new towns were emerging, the Musée de la ville de Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines is a social museum dedicated to the urban changes of the second half of the 20th century. It houses several collections related to the history of the area and lifestyles in the 1960s to the 1980s. Born of an interest in the lives of new residents and the layout of their homes, her "Design et modes de vie [Design and Lifestyles]" collection illustrates and documents our changing way of living. This collection is gradually being supplemented, sometimes with anonymous everyday objects, sometimes with signature pieces by renowned designers. It currently contains more than 3,200 items.



Robot-Marie Moulinex, 1960 | Musée de la Ville de Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines Collection | © Musée de la Ville de Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines © E. Deschamps

Manufactures Nationales – Sèvres & Mobilier national 17th/18th century



Kim Hamisky, *Table nappe*, 1978 | Mobilier national Collection | © Isabelle Bideau

After the merger of the Mobilier national and the Cité de la céramique – Sèvres & Limoges, the Manufactures Nationales came into being on 1 January 2025 to showcase France's excellent craftsmanship and rich tangible and intangible heritage with more than 53 artistic crafts on display in its factories and workshops. The only one in the world, this new public hub for decorative arts, crafts and design combines heritage with new creations and plays a central role in implementing the national strategy for crafts. Its activities focus on six priority areas: training; research; creation; supporting the vulnerable ecosystem around art professions, enhancing for vulnerable crafts ecosystem; real-world uses for heritage and showcasing our craftsmanship internationally.

Some designer collections

To complement this vast selection of museum pieces, Laurence Mauderli also approached some designers – Frédéric Beuvry, Ulysse Bouët, Pierre Charpin, Lucile Viaud and the Fondazione Franco Maria Ricci (FMR) – for loans.

the scenography

The scenography for *Design en main. Du langage à l'objet* was designed by Éric Benqué in collaboration with the graphic design studio Pentagon. The way the objects are staged is designed to reinforce the curator's message by suggesting different entry points into the collections. The deliberately free-form route arouses curiosity and means everyone can discover the 400 objects, films and visuals at their own pace.

A modular system

The museum initially commissioned scenography from which most components could be reused for at least the next two exhibitions at the Galerie Nationale du Design. Éric Benqué uses a square module construction, reinforced by four fins, as his design base. This system lets users arrange spaces and presentations in various ways. The aim is to arouse all visitors' curiosity and guide them through their journey.

Staging adapted to each section

For each of the six sections of the exhibition there are fitting moods and layouts, all strongly linked with the theme. Each stage can be experienced at a different pace, as it has more or fewer objects, and gives you unique ways of entering into the subject. The films and visuals along the way help shed more light on the pieces themselves and also mark a point where you can pause, wander around, and see things from a new perspective.

A main road and side roads

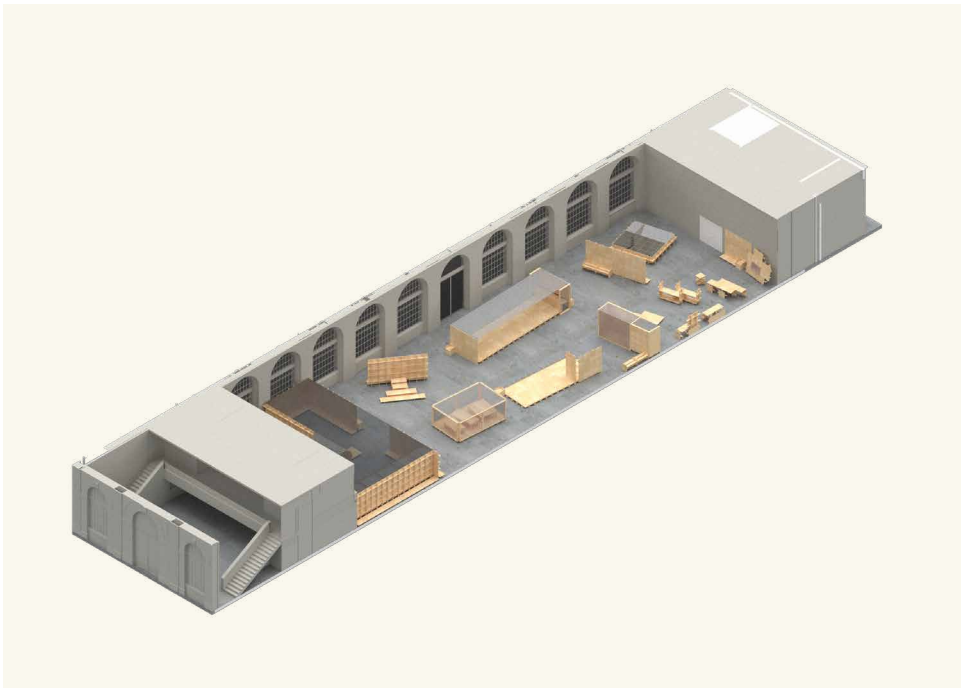
The way the exhibition is staged provides a legible framework that leaves room for visitors to take the initiative and build a personal perspective. The path is not linear. Though there is a suggestion of the order to take, it does not impose just one direction of travel. Everyone is allowed to follow the route or branch off, tread their own path, construct their own reading and establish their own connections.



■ **Éric Benqué** is an independent designer, specialising in furniture and object design, interior design and exhibition scenography. He approaches furniture as a way to explore materials, their transformations and the impact of forms; interior design as a tool for exploring everyday life and spaces; and scenography as an invitation to reveal hidden treasures. His projects, both public or private, vary greatly in scale and context, and are defined by a keen attention to the environment in which they are situated.

↳ benque.org

Scenography study for *Design en main. Du langage à l'objet* exhibition | © Éric Benqué



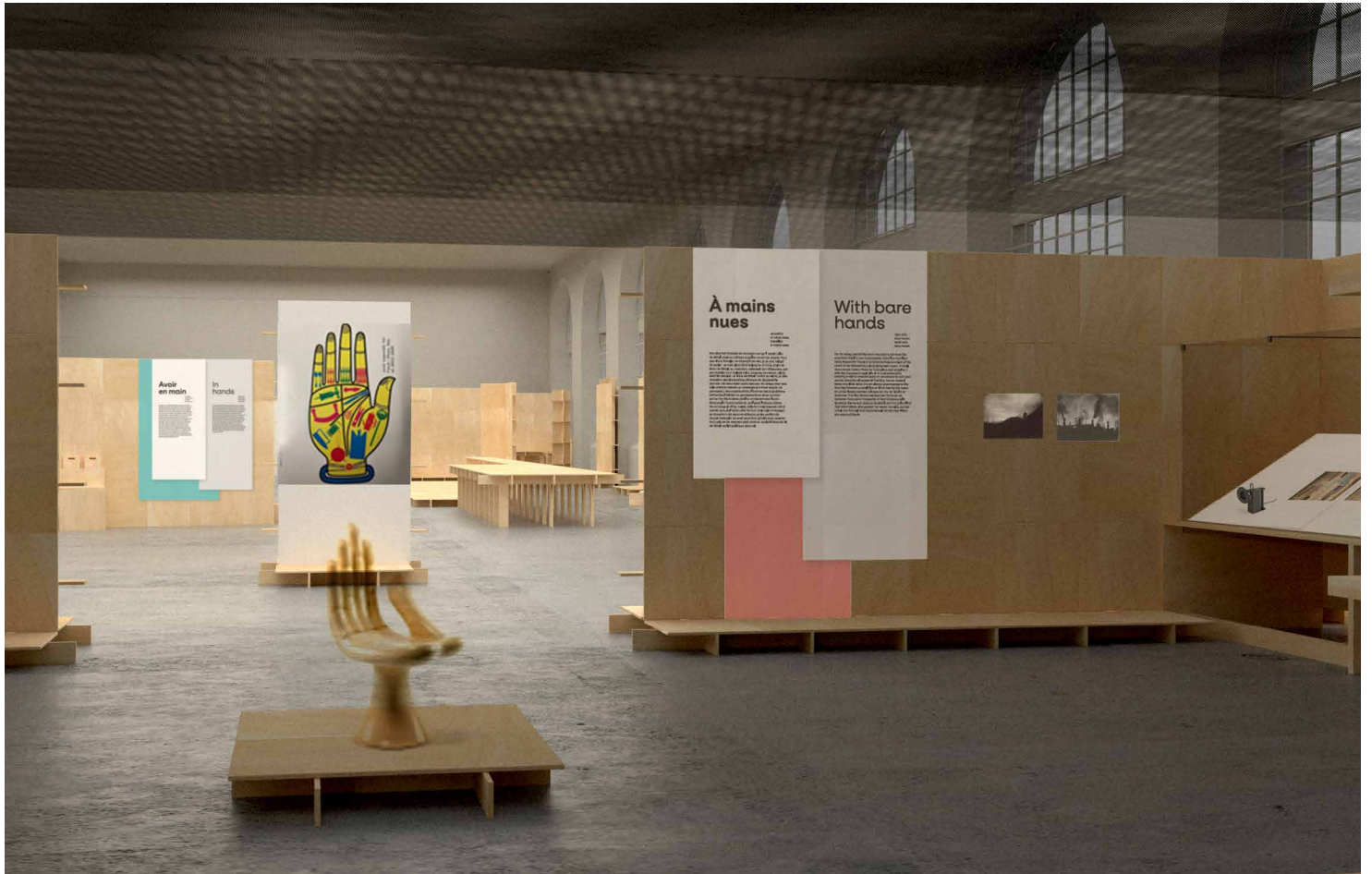
Scenography study for *Design en main. Du langage à l'objet* | © Éric Benqué



"Free movement means we can retrace our steps, look again and see a different point of view. The connections – both visual and intellectual – are then more meaningful and the experience more vibrant."

Éric Benqué

Designer and exhibition scenographer on *Design en main. Du langage à l'objet*



Scenography study for *Design en main. Du langage à l'objet* | © Éric Benqué

Graphic design

Atelier Pentagon designed all the graphics for the exhibition. They unfurl on large, overlapping sheets of paper. As well as being very adaptable, this presentation idea was designed to protect the picture rails so that they can be used again from one exhibition to another. The graphic design is intended to be structured and structuring: the panels hang down from picture rails and this gives levels of hierarchy to the content and makes it easier to distinguish

the French and English versions or highlight section titles. The font choices echo the exhibition's theme. The titles are in a constructed, standardised and precise typeface, where each letter asserts itself as a design object in its own right. In the body of the texts, the typeface is set for better readability.

■ Atelier Pentagon

Pentagon is a graphic design studio founded by Vanessa Goetz and Guillaume Allard. It specialises primarily in editorial and exhibition graphic design, for cultural institutions, publishing houses, artists and scenographers. Having worked as a duo for about fifteen years, the studio has developed a collaborative practice, focusing on typography, hierarchy and the structure of information. Research and experimentation are an integral part of their process.

↳ pentagon.fr

visitor experience

Interpretive and educational activities are built into the exhibition itself, and all ages are invited to take part in our many inclusive events. There are a range of options available, and you can choose between a self-guided tour, adaptable to individual preferences, and a longer guided, group experience. Designed to engage all the senses, these different options make for a full visitor experience, stimulating both mind and body.

For independent explorers

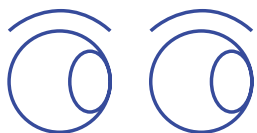
Visitors arriving to the Le Seuil reception area of the Galerie Nationale du Design are invited to proceed to the exhibition hall. QR codes and portable A4 signs are scattered throughout the exhibition to show you how to access enriched content. Visitors can interpret the subject matter and the objects on display on different levels. The "Allô Hector?" audio device highlights a selection of objects for little ones to enjoy through playful story-telling.

Flash visits and themed tours

Four days a week, museum guides - mostly students from the École Supérieure d'Art et Design de Saint-Étienne - run 30-40 minute discovery tours several times a day. The cost is included in the entrance fee. Once a month, there is also an expert (architect, curator, designer, etc.) is on hand to offer a themed guided tour that links the exhibition with other What's On events in the Cité du design quarter, especially the La Platine space for contemporary design.

Space set aside at the heart of the exhibition

There is a designated events space accessible to all visitors in the exhibition hall. It has a digital table providing historical insight, as well as a selection of books related to the exhibition. For younger children, there are tables and chairs where they can fill in the exhibition's specially designed activity book. Guided groups have time for discussion before and/or after their tour.



Allô Hector?

Conceived to be a fun and engaging tool, "Allô Hector?" was tested during the Biennale Internationale Design Saint-Étienne. In the exhibition hall of the Galerie Nationale du Design, analogue telephones call on visitors of all ages to pick up the receiver to listen to Hector and his friends talking about their favourite items among those on display. This arrangement offers a new way to engage with the works, by listening, with curiosity and storytelling, and helps to make design more accessible and easier to share.

the catalogue

The *Design en main. Du langage à l'objet* catalogue is both a reminder and an extension of the exhibition. It looks again at the main points of the tour and develops key themes to give the reader a broader interpretation. As a first volume in a flagship collection on design, it also opens up reflections on the current-day challenges in displaying, curating and conserving design. This fulfils the Galerie Nationale du Design's stated aims on science and heritage.

Giving a voice to design thinkers

The catalogue opens with an introduction by **Laurence Mauderli** that lays out the fundamentals of her curation, explaining the origin of the six phrases around which the exhibition is structured. Three more major figures in the field of design have contributed essays destined to become seminal. The anthropologist **Tim Ingold** explores the relationships between hand, machine, and making; **Aziza Gril Mariotte**, director of the Musée des Tissus in Lyon and professor of art history, analyses the genesis of art and industry museums; and design historian **Donna Loveday** looks at the challenges of curating exhibitions specifically on design.

Dialogue with designers

Laurence Mauderli sent questionnaires to five of the designers so that they could have their say on design, its qualities, its worth, its sustainability, its paradoxes, its role and its future. Read in conjunction with the exhibition, the responses from **Michele De Lucchi**, **Jasper Morrison**, **Studio Unfold** (Claire Warnier and Dries Verbruggen) and **Ulysse Bouët** offer valuable insight into the diversity of viewpoints on design and its complexity of definition. They all reveal a shared culture and common reference points, throw the spotlight onto iconic or up-and-coming creators and are all convinced that design carries with it meaning.

A look at the works

There are also nearly thirty detailed descriptions providing in-depth insights into key pieces in the exhibition. They have been chosen for the strength of their message and their ability to embody the curator's intentions. Written by **Laurence Mauderli**, **Joris Thomas**, head of the design appreciation department, and **Lola Carrel**, who manages design exhibitions and publications at MAMC+, these texts help to contextualize the objects, reveal their historical, technical or symbolic worth and give more insight into the exhibition.



"Curating is now an exercise in using objects to create compelling narratives that provoke a broader sense of design's possibilities, processes, and impacts."

Donna Loveday (excerpt from the catalogue)

Design Historian

TECHNICAL ELEMENTS

Title: *Design en main. Du langage à l'objet/ Design in Hand. From Language to Object*
Project management: Laurence Mauderli, Alexandre Quoi and Joris Thomas
Editorial management: Syndicat Empire SAS
Languages: French/English

Publisher: MAMC+/Empire Books
Format: 20.5 x 29.5 cm
Pages: approx. 200
Publication: June 2026
Price: €30

the galerie nationale du design

Design en main. Du langage à l'objet is not just an exhibition. It is a bold project that lays the foundations for the Galerie Nationale du Design. Designed to be a flagship venue for France, its mission is to showcase government design collections and offer multiple interpretations of them, reflecting the diversity of the discipline. Design now has a dedicated space with a window onto an exceptionally full part of our national heritage.

The only one in France

Due to be inaugurated on 10 June 2026 in the heart of Saint-Étienne's Cité du design quarter, the Galerie Nationale du Design showcases public design collections and the more than 30,000 pieces held throughout France. Each year, a design professional will be invited to curate a major exhibition, giving their take on the discipline by picking out pieces from these collections. In addition, events, facilitation and publications all create further talking points.

A 21st-century gallery in Saint-Étienne

Designed as an open and vibrant space, the Galerie Nationale du Design invites all visitors to explore, understand, share and question design and its uses, in all its forms. Spanning over 1,000 m², it offers exhibition, facilitation, meeting and experimental spaces, and complements other events at the Cité du design (in La Platine, La Cabane and during the Biennale Internationale Design Saint-Étienne). In this way, it contributes to the district's renewal and reaffirms Saint-Étienne as the design capital.

A partnership project

The Galerie Nationale du Design is managed jointly by the MAMC+ and the EPCC Cité du design-Ésad Saint-Étienne (public institution combining the Cité du design and the Saint-Étienne Higher School of Art and Design). Funded by Saint-Étienne Métropole with assistance from the French State, and supported by the Ministry for Culture, it is being built in partnership with major cultural institutions: CNAP, founding member, the Centre Pompidou, distinguished partner, as well as MADD Bordeaux and the FRAC Grand Large – Hauts-de-France. Each exhibition is an opportunity to expand this network by pooling our energy, knowledge and extraordinary collections.



Galerie Nationale du design, Cité du Design, Saint-Étienne | © Saint-Étienne Métropole, Butterfly Illustrations

Upcoming exhibitions



Chantal Prod'Hom | © Diana Pfammatter/BAK

Design du care (Care Design)

04. 2027 - 03.2028

Curation:
Chantal Prod'Hom

Invited to curate the second exhibition at the Galerie Nationale du Design from April 2027, Chantal Prod'Hom, art historian and former director of the Musée Cantonal de Design et d'Arts Appliqués Contemporains (MUDAC) in Lausanne (Switzerland), has chosen to look at design through the lens

of care and attention for oneself, for others and for living things. In collaboration with Susanne Hilpert Stuber, an independent curator, she explores the multifaceted nature of care design through major French collections, and in dialogue with contemporary art. This exhibition highlights the shift from design driven by intention to design driven by care. It pays tribute to a practice with ancient roots, albeit with a more recent name, which brings together the concepts of care, consideration, responsibility, solicitude and benevolence.



Marie Pok | © Emmanuel Laurent

L'emprise des signes (The Power of Signs)

04. 2028 - 03.2029

Curation:
Marie Pok

To curate the third exhibition in its opening cycle, the Galerie Nationale du Design invited Marie Pok, in her capacity as director of the CID - Centre d'Innovation et de Design - in Grand-Hornu (Belgium). In this exhibition, which will explore the graphic, symbolic and narrative dimensions of design,

Marie Pok proposes to study the role of objects as cultural markers and often-underestimated vectors of meaning. She shows how objects, which are rarely universal, are the product of the society that creates them. Far from being neutral, they tell stories, convey values, and define social status: objects of power, ritual accessories, consumer goods, etc. Through a selection of artefacts from diverse origins, Marie Pok examines our relationship with the object as a sign.

also worth seeing at the cité du design

la platine

Exhibitions

Anaïs Borie. Brèches fertiles (**Anaïs Borie. Fertile Breaches**)

From 29 April to 4 October 2026

Exhibition No. 5 in the
Present >> Future cycle

Curator and scenographer:
Anaïs Borie, Designer

Créer un vase (Craft a Vase)

From 29 April to 20 September
2026

Exhibition by the Centre National
des Arts Plastiques (CNAP):
21 vases created by the 10
winners of the public commission
for young designers run in 2023.

Curator: Céline Saraiva

Topographie du vase

(**Topography of the Vase**)

From 29 April to 4 October 2026

Installation around creating
vases as part of an educational
partnership between the CNAP
and Ésad Saint-Étienne

recto verso (Front and Back)

From 29 April to 4 October 2026

Exhibition by the 84 graduates
of the Ésad Saint-Étienne 2024
and 2025

Co-curators: collectif ppdesigner
and Éric Jourdan

Local Tools - Dialogues avec l'industrie

From 29 April to 16 August 2026

Exhibition of works by students
on the *Local Tools* post-master's
course at Ésad Saint-Étienne
Presentation at Paris Design Week
from 10th to 15th September 2026

Curator: Jean-François Dingjian

Press visit

Tuesday 28 April 2026 at
11:30 am

Opening

Tuesday 28 April 2026 at 6:30 pm

Opening hours

Open Tuesday to Sunday
From 10 am to 12:30 pm and from
1:30 pm to 6 pm

Prices

To be confirmed

Address

3 rue Javelin Pagnon
42000 Saint-Étienne

la cabane

A space dedicated to discovering
design in a hands-on and playful
way. Age 3 and upward.

Opening hours

Tuesday, Thursday and Friday
from 4 pm to 6pm

Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday
from 2pm to 6pm

→ During school holidays: Tuesday,
4 pm to 6 pm
Wednesday to Sunday,
2 pm to 6 pm

Prices

Free to all

Address

5 rue Javelin Pagnon
42000 Saint-Étienne

↳ citedudesign.com

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Design en main. Du langage à l'objet
Exhibition at the Galerie Nationale du Design
From 11 June 2026 to 7 March 2027

...and mamc+

musée d'art moderne et contemporain de saint-étienne métropole

Exhibitions

Frank Stella. Minimal/Maximal

From 27 June 2026 to
3 January 2027

An exhibition designated as an
"Exhibition of National Interest"
by the French Ministry for Culture

Curator: Alexandre Quoi
Scientific Advisor: Rachel Stella

Flying Colors - Dialogue avec les collections du Minneapolis Institute of Art (Dialogue with the collections of the Minneapolis Institute of Art)

From 27 June 2026 to
3 January 2027

150 works by around forty
American artists taken from the
collections of the Minneapolis
Institute of Art (MIA) and
the MAMC+

Curator: Aurélie Voltz

À déchiffrer. Suivre les traces dans les collections (Decode this. Follow trails through the collections)

From 27 June 2026 to
3 January 2027

An exhibition that explores
decoding as both a creative
process and a way to preserve
memory.

Curator: Zoé Marty

Opening hours

Every day except Tuesday
10 am to 6 pm and until 6:30 pm
on weekends

Prices

Full price €6.50
Reductions €5

Address

rue Fernand Léger
42270 Saint-Priest-en-Jarez

➤ mamc.saint-etienne.fr

practical information

Address

Galerie Nationale du Design
Cité du design
14 Esplanade Jacques Bonnaval
42000 Saint-Étienne

Opening hours

From Tuesday to Sunday
From 10 am to 12:30 pm and from
1:30 pm to 6 pm
Closed on Mondays, as well as
January 1st, May 1st, May 8th,
Ascension Thursday, July 14th,
August 15th, November 1st,
November 11th, December 24th
and 25th

Getting here

By tram: Cité du Design stop,
Tram T1 and T2
On foot: fifteen minutes from
place de l'Hôtel de ville

Prices

To be confirmed

Exhibition

Design en main. Du langage à l'objet
(*Design in Hand. From Language*
to Object)
From 11 June 2026 to 7 March 2027

Inauguration

Press visit
Wednesday 10 June 2026 at 11 am

Exhibition opening
Wednesday 10 June 2026 at 6:30 pm

Inaugural weekend
Saturday 13 and
Sunday 14 June 2026
From 10 am to 6 pm
Workshops and free entry to
exhibitions at the Galerie Nationale du
Design and La Platine

Visitor experience

Flash tours
Duration: 30 minutes
Capacity: 25 people
Free (included in ticket price)

"Full package"
Themed tours
Once a month
Duration: 1.5 to 2 hours

➤ galerienationaledudesign.fr

Acknowledgements

THE GALERIE NATIONALE DU DESIGN'S FUNDING PARTNERS



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