

free space
transformation
habiter

lacaton&vassal

espacio libre
transformación
habiter

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Straw hut, Niamey - 1984

From 1981 to 1985, five years in Niger creating urban development plans.

On the other side of the only bridge crossing the Niger, 1 km [1/2 mile] from the village of Saadia, a lot from which the view of Niamey was magnificent.

The house was built on one of the rare sand dunes of this bank, particularly well ventilated by cool air currents that follow the river's axes.

It was composed of three elements: the straw matting, for shelter, the walled enclosure and the "hangar"

for receiving visitors and looking out.

Facing Niamey, in the evening, the city's lights are bright enough to get your bearings.

The search for and selection of the site took six months, the construction two days.

The wind took two years to destroy it.



Latapie House, Bordeaux - 1993

This very economical house was built in 1993, in a suburb of Bordeaux,

for a couple with two children on a low budget.

Our intention was to provide with the largest possible space, far larger than the standard, while respecting strictly the budget.

We were also especially interested in horticultural greenhouses, because of their simple, efficient and economical technology made for taking advantage of the climate and natural energy and ventilation, and because of the lightness and transparency of the structures,

which create beautiful, pleasant and bright spaces.

The house is a simple volume on a square base, built like a shed.

A very simple metal frame is covered with opaque fiber-cement cladding on the street side

and with transparent polycarbonate cladding on the garden side, forming a large conservatory.

A wooden volume, clamped into the frame behind the opaque sheeting, defines a two levels insulated and heated winter space opening onto the conservatory and the street-side exterior.

On the garden side, the greenhouse, facing east, determines a large, sheltered and enclosed volume, luminous and transparent, unheated, with a temperate and pleasant climate, habitable almost all year round.

Large ventilation openings, like in agricultural greenhouses, ensure summer comfort.

The mobility of the east and west facades enables the house to change from its most closed to its most open state

according to the need and desire for light, transparency, intimacy, and ventilation.

The space of the house can vary according to the seasons, integrating the entire garden in high summer.



M House - Dordogne, 1997

The plot of the land is in the countryside, surrounded by fields and groves, close to a village and a river fringed by poplars, and along a small road.

The house is low, narrow and long, set in the shape of the plot, parallel to the road.

Its simplicity refers directly to the architecture of agricultural constructions.

The north-south implantation enables one to benefit from the optimum orientation and to have the best views of the countryside.

The house is composed of two independent parts which communicate via a central space.

One contains the main living rooms; the second has extra bedrooms and a garage.

The central space is conceived as a living room with a transparent roof, widely ventilated by openings in the roof

and the sliding panels of the facade. Like a greenhouse it contributes to the climatic comfort of the house.

The regular rhythm of the openings on the west, south and east facades makes for tremendous transparency, offering from within an almost uninterrupted view of the countryside,

each bay providing its particular framing of this.

The different spaces of the house have a variable “climatic” ambience,

offering the inhabitants the possibility of migrating from one spot to another according to the season, the time of the day, and the desires in order to find the most pleasant of sensations there.

A clear influence of Kazuo Shinohara can be seen in this house.



D House, Lège-Cap Ferret - 1996-1998

The plot, exposed to south-east was one of the last unbuilt lots on the shorefront along the Arcachon Bay.

It is a fragment of a sand dune that rises then drops toward the bay, covered with strawberry trees, mimosas and 46 pines.

The owners went there occasionally to relax or have a picnic and to build tree houses.

They loved the place as it was and wondered if it was possible to construct a house there while preserving the quality of the site, its dune and its vegetation.

It was therefore obvious that what had to be excluded was heavy earth moving, destructive to the sand's soil, to avoid cutting down the pines

and clearing the low-lying vegetation, and to raise the house

above ground to take advantage of the view.

The house is perched 4 m above the ground on a metal structure with 12 posts, carefully anchored in the ground by independent micro-piles to preserve the soil of the dune.

It slips between the trees.

All the pine trees are preserved and 6 of them cross the house.

From the inside, through the entirely glazed southern façade, extended by a terrace, the view is panoramic over the Bay, while from the water, the house blends into the vegetation.

The pines are very old and will die one day, but why anticipate and cut down trees that are still alive?

It is possible to build differently, and the house will continue its life because it is not built around the trees.



F House, Bordeaux - 1999

A former cookie factory that occupied the entire deep lot, 50 m [164 ft.] long x 10 m [34 ft.] wide, was converted into a house.

The inside of the structure was almost empty, dark and had no view outside.

Part of the roof was removed in order to create a garden between the walls allowing natural light to penetrate the middle of the lot and create views.

In the central part, the tiles were replaced by a polycarbonate atrium to create a winter garden that,

in addition to adding pleasure, lights the rooms and distributes the house.

It is well ventilated by openings in the roof.

The glass facades, created on the indoor and outdoor gardens,

contribute transparency from one end of the lot to the other.

The house is a series of contrasting and generous spaces.

You enter from the street, going through a large, dark garage, then a series of spaces left as they were or

remodeled to end in the covered patio, then in the living room-kitchen that opens onto the new garden.



S House, Coutras - 2000

The long and narrow lot is located near Coutras, 50 km [30 miles] east of Bordeaux, in a mostly agricultural area with very few buildings.

The flat landscape is dominated by the sky.

As the budget was very small, part of the house was built by the owners themselves.

The house is composed of two juxtaposed greenhouses of 150 m² [1,615 sq. ft.] each, made of a metal structure and transparent polycarbonate siding as can be seen everywhere in this type of landscape.

These greenhouses are equipped with an intelligent and simple technology that can regulate the interior climate.

It controls the opening panels in the roof, based on the indoor temperature.

They automatically close in case of rain and wind.

In the first greenhouse, to the west, a wood skin defines the living spaces.

The second, to the east, is a winter garden.

The two parts easily communicate with each other.

This house is therefore a new version of the free plan, combining a high-performance shell as well as free and adaptable spaces.

The peripheral partition walls open half way by means of sliding doors, some of which, opaque, allow certain rooms to be darkened.

Using greenhouses enabled large spaces to be built at a low cost while offering many possibilities of use,

a capacity for variable use, as well as multiple atmospheres and sensations.



R House, Keremba - 2005

This house's lot is located behind a dune a few dozen meters from the sea, which is to the north. You do not see the sea, but you can constantly sense its presence, through sound, wind, clouds.

The house is inserted parallel to the lot's northern and southern limits,

between the edge of woods and a clearing.

It is comprised of three separate buildings, arranged in the arc of a circle, the convex side facing north,

exposed to bad weather and wind, the concave side facing south, creating a more private protected exterior

space with a good exposure.

The three volumes all have the same dimensions, areas, shapes, heights

and only differ in their interior layout, the type of shell and how they are closed.

Sliding shutters close the façades.

Open, they link the houses to each other modifying the relationship between indoors and outdoors.

The western house: living room, kitchen (33 m²) [355 sq. ft.], four bedrooms, bathroom

The northern house: living room, kitchen (61 m²) [655 sq. ft.], one bedroom, bathroom.

The eastern house: all uses (78 m²)

[845 sq. ft.]. Transparent roofs and walls, sand floor.



Cité Manifeste, Mulhouse - 2005

This project for 14 single-family houses is part of an operation for 61 dwellings created by five teams of architects

in the extended space of a housing estate in Mulhouse.

Our aim is to produce quality houses that are, for the same price, considerably larger than the standardized housing usually met with.

To begin with, the creating of a structure and a cheap and effective simple envelope enables us to define,

on the loft principle, a maximum surface area and volume with contrasting, complementary and surprising spatial qualities.

On the ground floor a post/beam structure in concrete supports a platform at a height of 3 m, upon which horticultural greenhouses are fixed.

The frame is in galvanized steel, the walls in transparent polycarbonate.

Part of the greenhouse is isolated and heated. The other part constitutes a winter garden, largely ventilated via the roof and facade.

A horizontal sunshade unfurls inside the greenhouse.

The greenhouse principle, with its automated climate-control devices, has enabled solutions to the bioclimate to be developed.

Then, we divide the volume into 14 dwellings, set crosswise in duplex form, which profit from all the different qualities offered by the diversity of the spaces.



23 dwellings, Trignac - 2010

The project concerns 23 social housing apartments in two buildings.

The objective was to produce quality housings, which are, at the same price, much bigger than usual habitations resulting from regulations.

Continuing the principles of the Cité Manifeste in Mulhouse, the realisation of a simple, economic, efficient structure and envelope allows to define, on the principles of a loft, a maximum free surface and volume, offering spatial qualities as well as contrasted and complementary ambiances.

The two buildings are conceived with the same principle: a concrete pillar-beam structure on one level for one of the buildings and on two levels for the other, and horticulture greenhouses of 3 m and 6 m fixed on the platforms, covering all the surface with a light and transparent envelope, forming the upper level of each construction.

A part of the greenhouse is occupied by an insulated and heated volume.

The other part comprises a winter garden, generously ventilated on the roof and façade with a horizontal shadow system.

The principle of the greenhouse with its automatic devices for the climat management allows to create bioclimatic comfort solutions and to obtain performative objectives for reducing energy consumption.

The created volumes are divided in 13 through apartments in the first building and 10 double oriented in the second.

The flats are mostly duplexes and profit of the different qualities proposed by the diversity of spaces.



53 dwellings, Saint-Nazaire - 2011

The lot, near the city center, is wedged in between a dense group of apartment houses built in the 1960s,

ground floor plus five stories, low-density single-family housing estates and a sports park.

The request concerns the creation of new rental housing which combines with the diversity of the context.

The dwellings are organised in units of 6 dwellings at R+2, arranged along parallel streets, created from east to west towards the park.

The rows are about 15 metres apart, comprising a pedestrian passage of 4 m and private gardens on each side.

Access to the dwellings is between the houses via pedestrian walkways.

Parking spaces are confined near the street under the first two buildings, to keep the streets pedestrian.

The dwellings are dual aspect, north-south, very spacious,

with a winter garden on South and on each side, a balcony or a garden on the ground floor.

They benefit from an optimised and economical mixed building system

–a post-beam steel frame, large-span alveolar concrete slab flooring–

made up of repetitive standardized elements that provide with a great deal of flexibility.

Winter gardens of 2 m depth, become in summer shaded terraces thanks to the opening of the sliding facade.

Thermal insulating curtains behind the glass facades and shading curtains behind the winter garden facades

provide effective control of temperature, sunlight or light.

Our objective was to make collective housing evolve toward the qualities which characterize an individual house: verandas, individual access, exterior space.



59 dwellings, Neppert Gardens – Mulhouse – 2014 and 2015

Ten years after the Cité Manifeste, this project of 59 social rental dwellings constitutes a second realisation with the SOMCO in Mulhouse.

Repeating the intentions of the Cité Manifeste, the common aims for the project are first defined in terms of quality of living and generosity of space:

- creating dwellings surfaces bigger than the standard;
- offering additional and intermediate spaces, with different characteristics than traditional rooms in an individual house, that widen the uses, the diversity of spaces and the climatic possibilities;
- bringing the collective housing closer to an individual house, developing principles such as outdoor spaces that extend the indoor rooms.

Some of the dwellings are duplex apartments. The flats, from T1 to T5, are running through.

The living rooms, south-east oriented, open on to an un-overlooked terrace, that can be fully closed in winter.

These winter gardens, widely opened in summer, encourage a bioclimatic system by avoiding overheating problems with a natural ventilation, and create a buffer space in winter.

The construction is performing in terms of energy saving.

The constructive system is mostly composed by industrialized elements.

The project's conception satisfies the requirements regarding the respect for the environment, the energy saving, and fits to the sustainable development philosophy, including the inhabitant's quality of living as a main criteria.



96 dwellings, Chalon-sur-Saône - 2016

The project is composed of four buildings, in continuity but independent.

They settle along the existing paths on the site.

Their form is inspired of the “Manivelle” buildings, built on the north of the site.

The buildings are raised above the ground to take account of flood risk.

As a response to this constraint, the first level of construction is built at 4,50 m above the natural ground

(instead of the 1,30 m minimum requested by the law) in order to create transparency, lightness as well as a pleasant space under the construction where gardens or playgrounds can take place.

The accommodations are located from 4,50 m stacked on 2 to 5 storeys above this level.

They emerge from the urban ground giving better conditions of calm and better views.

Architecture is light and the construction’s footprint is minimum.

It is limited to a few columns and the platforms for the stairs and elevators.

Vegetation can continue to grow under the buildings, appropriated by the inhabitants, for gardens or playgrounds and public walking paths are passing through the field.

The dwelling’s space is generous, much bigger than the standards of social housing, without increasing

the cost of the construction per dwelling, neither the rent for the tenants.

All of them have private extra spaces –large winter gardens and balconies– expanding the living space,

which give the possibility to each inhabitant to have a relation to the nature around.



Bois-le-Prêtre Tower, 100 dwellings, Paris - 2011

Built in the 60's by Raymond Lopez, along the northern ring road of Paris, the 50 m [164 ft.] the Bois-le-Prêtre tower comprises 96 social rental apartments.

A first renovation in the 1980s, limited to the external insulation of the facades, has degraded the architecture and the quality of the dwellings: loggias were closed, wide glazed facades replaced by small PVC windows, reducing light and views, under stilts ground floor were closed and darkened.

Inside, the tower reveals warm and personalized interiors, which contrast with the degraded tower's external image.

The construction system, made of concrete floors and bearing walls and independent non-structural facades, offers a good potential of transformation.

The project starts from the interior of the dwelling to give it again light and air, more generous living spaces, without modifying the existing structure, and proposes to realize the works without moving the inhabitants.

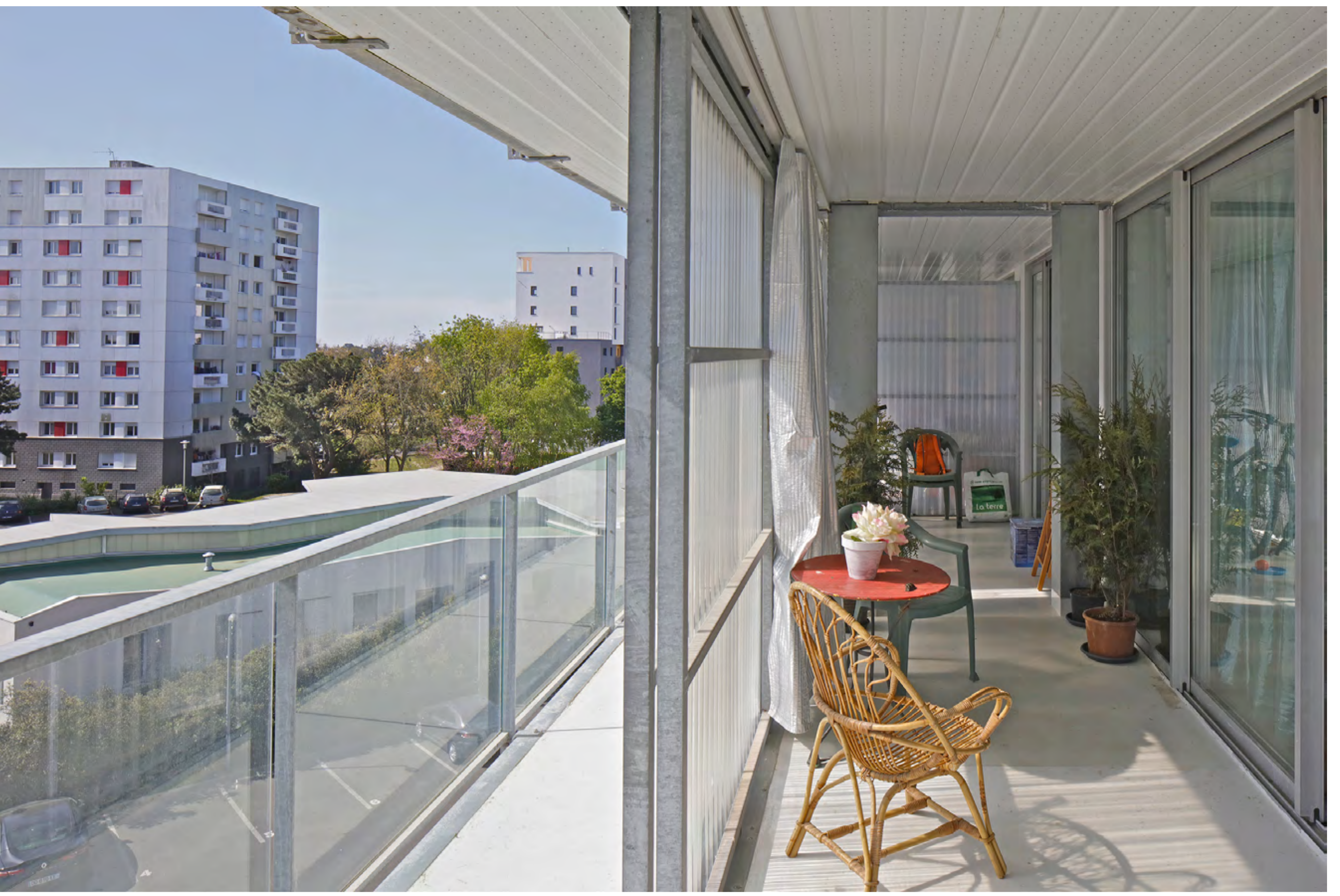
The apartments are enlarged and extended, along the entire periphery, by a space 3 m [10 ft.] deep, composed of a winter garden and a balcony.

These extensions are made of prefabricated and light repetitive modules, in order to build quickly, an essential condition for works in occupied sites.

The addition of –non heated– winter gardens reduces energy consumption by half and noise pollution, increases the amount of light and the habitability of the apartments.

A rather long dialogue with the inhabitants was processed all along the project.

The cost of the transformation is about half that of demolition and reconstruction and the rents has not been significantly increased.



La Chesnaie, 80 dwellings, aint-Nazaire - 2014 and 2016

Emblematic of the urban planning of the 1960s with a low density on ground, the neighborhood of La Chesnaie in Saint-Nazaire, ideally situated between sea and city centre, has nevertheless lost its attractiveness and an urban renewal project has been launched.

Rather than demolishing and rebuilding the project proposes long-term requalification through the radical transformation of the 40 apartments of one of the existing towers and its densification through 40 new dwellings grafted onto its gable ends, taking advantage of the large empty parking lots

around the buildings.

Each existing apartment is increased of 33 m² as such.

A wintergarden of 2 m deep and a balcony of 1 m, are added in front of the original façade without any major structural works or affecting the organization of the building.

Each bathroom of 3 m² is relocated in an existing 9 m² bedroom with a window, while a new bedroom is created in an extension connected to the living room by the winter garden serving at the same time

as an extension of the living room and a climatic control device.

The newly constructed apartments also have generous spaces, with winter gardens and balconies.

The transformation, extension and densification of the block is much more cost effective than the demolition of the 40 existing flats and the reconstruction of 80 new ones, and ultimately provides

apartments that are more generous than the new standard of construction.

Developed in the area, the principle would permit the construction of 258 new dwellings, the qualitative

transformation of 312 flats, without using natural ground nor reducing the large central park.



Cité du Grand Parc G H I; 530 dwellings, Bordeaux - 2016

The project consists in the transformation of 3 modernist social housing blocks, fully occupied in the Cité du Grand Parc in Bordeaux, a modernist district counting 4000 dwellings, built in the early 60's.

The 3 buildings, 10 to 15 floors high gathering 530 dwellings, were to be demolished.

The demolition was finally abandoned and the renovation became necessary.

The project of transformation starts from the interior of the dwellings, to give new qualities to the dwellings, by inventing with precision and care the existing qualities, that should be preserved, and what is missing that must be supplemented.

The project is based on the choice of transforming the existing building without doing important interventions

on the existing: the structure, the stairs or the floors and of proceeding by additions and extensions.

This approach on economy makes it possible to concentrate the resources on generous extensions that

improve the quality and the dimension of the dwellings in a significant and sustainable way.

All apartments open on to large winter gardens and balconies, which give the opportunity to enjoy more space, more natural light, more mobility of use, better views and offer pleasant extra spaces, 3,80 m deep,

large enough to be fully used.

The existing windows are replaced by large glassed sliding doors, which connect every room of the dwelling to the winter garden, offering more freedom of use and mobility, like in a house.

It is an extraordinary living situation.

The transformation was implemented in an occupied site.

All the inhabitants stayed in their dwellings without any increase in rent.



Palais de Tokyo, Paris - 2001 and 2012

The thing that has made the Palais de Tokyo so special and contributed so much to its reputation since the reopening in 2001, in addition to its artistic programs, is the broad freedom it offers to the visitors

and to the artworks. And the feeling of a place its visitors can make their own.

Ten years after, the new phase of development extends the area occupied to the entire space of its four levels

while remaining faithful to its role of promoting creation and access to contemporary art.

Very open to the public and to the local neighborhood, it hosts exhibitions, events, films, music, fashion,

a bookstore, and a café-restaurant.

In 2001, the reference for the first phase developed on one single level, was that of an open outdoor space,

the square Djema el Fnaa, a large empty space in the center of Marrakech, constantly moving, 24/7, occupied by cars, bikers, vendors, artists, acrobats and poets, spectators...

For the second phase, the use of the verticality refers to the Fun Palace of Cedric Price.

The combination of times, spaces and events forms the architecture of the place.

The project for the Palais de Tokyo offers a maximum possible available space.

It takes advantage of the extraordinary qualities of the existing architecture, transforming it slightly and judiciously to create the diversity of the desired uses.

Being free to go up and down, to move from one space to another,

ensuring that the public sees something at all levels.

Taking time... Staying...

The Palais offers now 24,000 m² usable, including 16,000 m² open to the public.



Faculty of Management Sciences, Bordeaux - 2008

A neighborhood of stalls with rose gardens on the right bank of Bordeaux.

Sited in an evolving urban context, the structure marks the return of the university to the city center. It forms a very urban, dense island built on the alignment of the streets.

There are four buildings around a plaza, passages and interior patios on different levels.

The structure is built out of raw concrete prefabricated elements, columns, beams, large-span slabs, constituting a flexible and economical construction system.

The all-glass façades provide abundant natural lighting, adjustable via exterior blinds, which help provide

thermal comfort, and offer broad views of the city. The exterior blinds, which can be oriented and raised, are automated.

In the summer, they are an efficient protection against heat build-up on the façades.

In the winter, the spaces benefit from solar heat gains.

Exterior balconies provide an outdoor space and permit the glass to be cleaned.

The underground parking garage skirts the central courtyard, which has been left unpaved.

Common facilities, auditoriums, the library, the multimedia center and the restaurant are on the ground and first floors.

Above them, four departments occupy four buildings, organized around four patios, on three levels.

660 climbing rosebushes are planted on the balconies.

Decorative and poetic, they evoke the charm of the nearby stalls' gardens.

Their existence shifts attention to their fragility and delicacy and shifts perception of the architecture.



School of Architecture, Nantes - 2009

In building a structure of great capacity, on a plot of 5,000 m² alongside the Loire, the project comes up with a scheme capable of creating a set of rich and diverse situations of interest to the School of Architecture, the city and the landscape.

Three decks at nine, sixteen and twenty-three meters above the natural ground level, served by a gentle sloping external ramp, progressively put the ground surface of the city in touch with the sky overhead. They multiply the natural ground and allow its maximum extension, which make it possible to increase

the surface areas requested for the program, but also to double them by multipurpose open spaces. A volume equivalent to the programmed space is added that has no specific function and that shifts and broadens the activity.

A lightweight steel structure redivides the height of the main levels.

It enables the spaces devoted to the program to be generously installed and creates a system adapted to their extension and their future evolution.

Linked to the spaces of the program are ample, double-height volumes with non-attributed functions,

the transparent façades of which harness the sun's rays and vouchsafe the indoor climate.

On the initiative of the students, teachers or visitors, these spaces become the locus of possible appropriations, events and programming.

At any moment the adaptation of the school to new interventions and its reconversion are possible.

Like a pedagogical tool, the project questions the program and the practices of the school as much as the norms,

technologies and its own process of elaboration.



Polyvalent Hall Le Grand Sud, Lille - 2003

The multi-purpose hall “Le Grand Sud” is part of the 28 ha restructuring of the Arras Europe sector in Lille.

A place of cultural diffusion on the city scale, it also hosts the new district’s non-profit organizations and events.

The project slips under a vast accessible roof formed by a sloping public garden, created by the development of the district.

In the volume of variable height, following the slope of the garden, the auditorium takes up the central area.

Freed from load-bearing elements, it is equipped with movable and modular bleachers of 600 seats and a staging area in the forefront.

Surrounding this is a large, 2,500 m² space at park level, for the rest of the public functions.

The space is flexible and versatile, thanks to a system of big curtains and acoustic folding doors, easily manipulated, on a system of rails, allowing numerous capacities and configurations.

The volume disappears under the garden, and reveals only two façades composed:

in the lower part, big sliding windows, 2,50 m high, that are fully openable;

in the upper part, the ETFE facades are composed of 2 m thick greenhouses, containing flower planters and equipped with an automatic system of natural ventilation, watering, shading curtains, etc. to enable climate control.

Perpendicular to the central room, a mobile façade can open along its entirety, realizing the room’s maximal extension towards the park, creating a scenic backdrop.



FRAC Grand Large, Dunkirk - 2015

The FRAC houses regionally assembled public collections of contemporary art, which are conserved, archived and exhibited either on site, or in other public places.

The new FRAC of the North Region had to be installed in an old boat warehouse, called Halle AP2,

the only one remaining of the huge shipyard located on the site of Dunkerque port, as a singular and symbolic object.

Its internal volume is immense, bright, impressive, with an amazing potential of use.

To implant the FRAC and also to keep the void of the Halle in its entirety becomes the founding idea.

The project creates a double of the Halle, of the same dimension, attached to the existing building, on the north side which faces the sea, which contains the program of the FRAC.

The new building juxtaposes delicately without competing nor fading.

Under a light transparent and bioclimatic envelope, a prefabricated and efficient structure determines free,

flexible and evolutionary platforms, with few constraints, for the exhibition rooms, closed by transparent glass

and the artwork reserves closed by opaque walls.

The double envelope creates a large intermediate climatic space, very luminous used for circulations or belvedere.

The halle AP2 will remain a completely available space, it becomes an extra space, unprogrammed, which can work either for exceptional temporary exhibitions, creation of large size works, particular hangings, or independently for large public events, concerts, circus, sport ...

The project of the FRAC, including extra space of the Halle AP2,

has been realised with the given budget for the basic program.