

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

TA NEA

Jean Nouvel's Mirrors in Athens

The Famous architect presents his colored, shifting Triptyques at Gagosian Gallery

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Jean Nouvel touching one of his Triptyques that are exhibited in Athens

Jean Nouvel is a starchitect. Not only because he holds a Pritzker Prize, or because each of his architectural projects has many supporters as well as opponents, but because, despite his strong personality, he allows his buildings to develop their own “personality.” He divides his time between large-scale commissions and research to find solutions for everyday needs. “I am an amateur. In the sense of a person who loves something, who has the sense of adventure, of resourcefulness, who is in love with things. I’m not a designer, I’m an architect that likes designing” – this is the way the French architect describes himself. He will be in Athens tomorrow, along with his colored mirrors and a refined toolbox, in order to present another part of his multifaceted creativity at Gagosian Gallery.

Jean Nouvel presents four colored mirrors at the exhibition. “The mirror is a piece that you want to live with, in which you reflect intimate images. It creates mysteries as well as images that travel in space forever,” he mentions referring to his colored, three-paneled shifting *Triptyques*.

Every Jean Nouvel building tells a different story. Contrary to what architects typically do, which is to begin the design process with a sketch pad or scale models, Nouvel starts with an idea he can express in words. “I grew up in the milieu of Structuralist thinkers. If I don’t have a good analysis of something, I am lost. What I like is the poétique of the situation. I am a hedonist, and I want to give pleasure to other people,” the 70-year old architect with the intense gaze, the enormous shaved head, the bushy black eyebrows and the signature black felt hat once said to *The New York Times*. “This mental procedure aims at an outcome that springs from the instinct.”

IN THE CENTER OF PARIS

The center of Paris is dominated by Nouvel's architectural projects: starting with the Cartier Foundation for Contemporary Art, an elegant glass and steel building, to the Institute of the Arab World, with its arabesque southwestern façade letting sunlight penetrate it and illuminate the interior, or the newly built Musée du Quai Branly close to the Eiffel Tower. The hodgepodge of vividly colored components dominating Branly, along with the vertical garden and the huge glass wall overlooking the Seine have delighted both visitors as well as passers-by. On the other hand, it has outraged many anthropologists and museologists who mourn the loss of a cleaner, clinical display for museums.

“Every architecture is an opportunity to create what I call the missing pieces of the puzzle,” he explains. “To find how you can create more poetry with the place where you are and the program you have. You research what will be the most emotional, the most perfect, the most natural.”

In 2008, Pritzker Prize jury chose to honor him with the award “because he is brave enough to adapt his courageous pursuit of new ideas to the individual needs of every one of his projects without having a single morphological vocabulary.” It was the same year that the Stavros Niarchos Foundation delegates had an appointment with him in Paris concerning the architectural program for the Cultural Center at Faliron Delta, Athens, Greece. He was rejected in favour of the Italian architect Renzo Piano. But Nouvel had already started designing the building that would house the University Library of Cyprus. As well as the 67-meter-high tower including a mix of apartments, offices and shops, which he named White Walls. It became the new landmark of Eleftheria Square (meaning Freedom Square) since its completion in 2015. The Louvre Abu Dhabi, and the National Museum of China (NAMOC) are among the projects currently in planning.

INFO

Gagosian Gallery Athens, 3 Merlin Str., until 30 July. Nouvel will be present at the opening reception tomorrow at 19.00