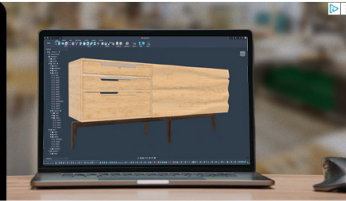


From concept to craftsmanship

Connect furniture design and production with Autodesk Fusion

[Learn more](#)

 AUTODESK



de
zeen

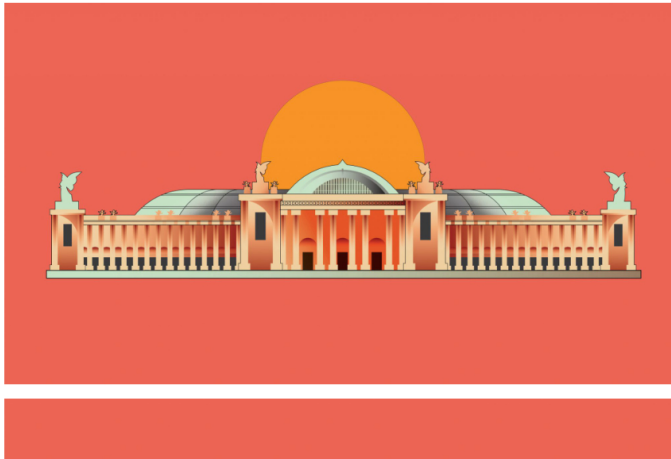
Magazine
Architecture
Interiors
Design
Technology

Series
Interviews
Opinion
Talks
Videos
Newsletters

Awards
Jobs
Events Guide
Showroom
School Shows
Courses
Competitions

Search

Follow:      



The Grand Palais was the most significant building of 2024



Lizzie Crook | 30 January 2025 | 10 comments

The final project on our list of the 25 most significant buildings of the 21st century is the restoration of the Grand Palais in Paris by Chatillon Architectes, bookending our series with two powerful stories of reuse and renewal.

Few buildings garnered as much international attention in 2024 as the Grand Palais, even though it was built 124 years earlier.

The sweeping glass and steel structure on the Champs-Élysées reopened following its first major restoration, securing its place as a venue for the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

It was a herculean effort led by the French studio Chatillon Architectes, which guided a team of 1,000 artisans from over 50 companies to turn the project around in under four years.

Though the Grand Palais was already one of Paris's most loved landmarks, these efforts gave rise to what became a centrepiece of the event. Echoing the ethos of the 2024 games – touted as the greenest ever – it illustrated the value of preserving architectural heritage.

It is a fitting end to our series, which began with the Tate Modern – an art gallery in the shell of an abandoned power station completed in 2000 by Herzog & de Meuron.

Together, the projects offer a masterclass on how a building's history can be respected while being brought up to modern-day standards with contemporary tools, sending a pertinent message to the architectural community as it navigates an age of demolition.



The Grand Palais was the most significant building of 2024

The Grand Palais is arguably best known for its vast and intricate barrel-vaulted atrium, or nave, which is crafted from more than 6,000 tonnes of steel. It is crowned by the largest glass roof in Europe.

Upon its reopening, architecture critic Stephen Zacks described the renovated building as "a show-stopping 21st-century centrepiece".

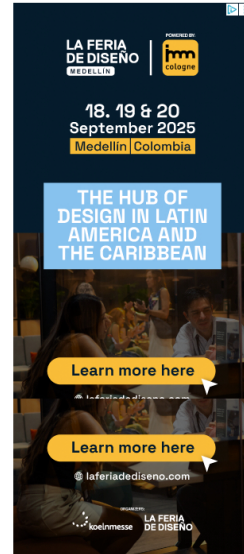
Meanwhile, the Financial Times hailed it as "an architectural cadavre exquis", where "everywhere you look there are treasures".

'A show-stopping 21st-century centrepiece' - Stephen Zacks in Metropolis

Though the 72,000-square-metre landmark stole the limelight in 2024, the building's significance runs to long before that.

Built to host the Paris Universal Exhibition in 1900 to showcase French art, it has served as an ornate backdrop to many international exhibitions and events, ranging from Chanel fashion shows to art fairs including Art Basel Paris.

More somberly, it was even used as a world war one military hospital and, during the



Top architecture stories

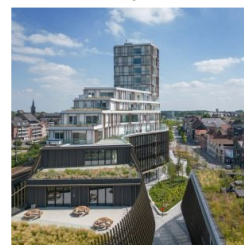
Most popular

Most recent



- 1 Eight buildings enveloped in rustic rough-sawn timber cladding
- 2 SOM carries out "complete transformation" of New York's iconic Waldorf Astoria hotel
- 3 Suyian Lodge safari resort in Kenya "feels deeply integrated" with site
- 4 Floating pinecone-shaped huts shelter ducks from "Taiwan's intensely hot summers and frequent typhoons"
- 5 Twisted House "mirrors the undulating landscape" in Kent with curved roof

Snohetta adds buildings to Roeselare railway site to "reconnect the city"



Foster + Partners reveals designs for Paraguay's tallest skyscraper

Nazi occupation of Paris, as an exhibition space for propaganda.



Originally built in 1900, it reopened last year following an extensive renovation by Chatillon Architectes

Chatillon Architectes’ ambition for the project was to preserve and celebrate as much of the original Beaux-Arts structure as possible, honouring the original vision of its architects Henri Deglane, Albert Louvet, Albert Thomas and Charles Girault.

Changes have included reopening areas once closed to the public, and the carving out of a sightseeing route into its plan. Its building services have also been modernised, bringing the building up to the standards of a modern-day events venue.

The scale of work was so unprecedented it required the studio to split it into two phases, with the first centred around the nave, ensuring it was ready to host fencing and taekwondo events in the Olympics.

‘We have approached the project with a contemporary mindset, ensuring that the building is prepared for its next phase of life’ - Francois Chatillon

This phase also involved improving the link between the Grand Palais and the surrounding gardens, while reinstating the building’s original central axis across its H-shaped plan, reconnecting its three main spaces – including the nave.

In the nave itself, Chatillon Architectes restored the ornate balconies and improved escape routes, allowing its capacity to increase by more than 60 per cent.

The second phase, which is yet to complete, is focused on its surrounding rooms. Its full reopening as a sporting and cultural events venue is expected in 2025, when the Centre Pompidou will temporarily move into the galleries.



The building was used as a venue for the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games

“The scale of the project is quite unbelievable, from the design stage to the construction,” studio founder Francois Chatillon told Dezeen on a tour of the building before its opening.

“We have explored thousands of archival documents to truly understand the building and its original intentions,” he continued.

“Our focus has always been to honour and restore the best of the building’s past but not to do this blindly. We have approached the project with a contemporary mindset, ensuring that the building is prepared for its next phase of life and that, above all, it is a functioning building for modern society.”

When French president Emmanuel Macron announced plans for the project it was met with scepticism due to the quick timeframe in which it was to be delivered. Next to the restoration of the fire-damaged Notre-Dame Cathedral, it is reportedly the



Grimshaw completes "iconic entry point" rail station for Los Angeles at LAX



Ennead Architects creates consulate with "monumental diplomatic presence"



Subscribe

Subscribe to our newsletters

Email

Next

Herzog & de Meuron completes renovation of historic Basel hotel



Dezeen's guide to traditional earthen building materials



Popular jobs

Featured jobs

XUL

country's largest public building project.



Read:
Herzog & de Meuron's Tate Modern was the most significant building of 2000

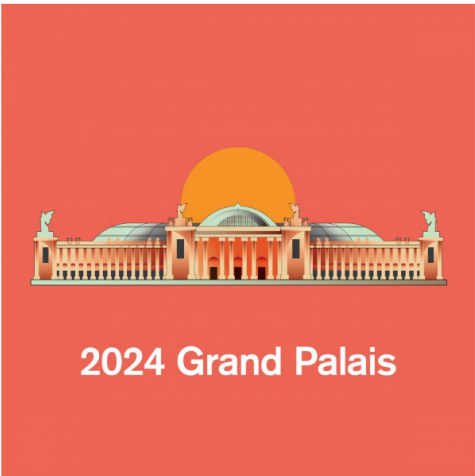
"Four years ago, we were told that it was still crazy," said Macron of the Grand Palais restoration. "But now the whole world will rediscover the Grand Palais as a place of creation, of exhibition, of knowledge, of welcoming the public."

Giving the building back to the public in this way was always the overarching goal of the studio, according to Chatillon.

"Our main objective from the very beginning was to make the Grand Palais a public building again," he said. "In recent times, it is a building that has been accessible on occasion but not possible to truly experience – it became a monument that was often only observed from afar."

"We have been able to make the Grand Palais a functioning building once again and one that the public can now truly enjoy and explore."

Did we get it right? Was the Grand Palais renovation by Chatillon Architectes the most significant building completed in 2024? Let us know in the comments. With all 25 buildings revealed, we will be running a poll to determine the most significant building of the 21st century so far.



This article is part of Dezeen's 21st-Century Architecture: 25 Years 25 Buildings series, which looks at the most significant architecture of the 21st century so far. For the series, we have selected the most influential building from each of the first 25 years of the century.

The illustration is by Jack Bedford and the photography is by Laurent Kronental.

21st Century Architecture: 25 Years 25 Buildings

- 2000:** Tate Modern by Herzog & de Meuron
- 2001:** Gando Primary School by Diébédo Francis Kéré
- 2002:** Bergisel Ski Jump by Zaha Hadid
- 2003:** Walt Disney Concert Hall by Frank Gehry
- 2004:** Quinta Monroy by Elemental
- 2005:** Morioka House by Ryue Nishizawa
- 2006:** Madrid-Barajas airport by RSHP and Estudio Lamela
- 2007:** Oslo Opera House by Snøhetta
- 2008:** Museum of Islamic Art by I M Pei
- 2009:** Murray Grove by Waugh Thistleton Architects
- 2010:** Burj Khalifa by SOM
- 2011:** National September 11 Memorial by Handel Architects
- 2012:** CCTV Headquarters by OMA
- 2013:** Cardboard Cathedral by Shigeru Ban
- 2014:** Bosco Verticale by Stefano Boeri
- 2015:** UTEC Lima campus by Grafton Architects
- 2016:** Transformation of 530 Dwellings by Lacaton & Vassal, Frédéric Druot and Christophe Hutin
- 2017:** Apple Park by Foster + Partners
- 2018:** Amager Bakke by BIG
- 2019:** Goldsmith Street by Mikhail Riches with Cathy Hawley
- 2020:** Anandoloy by Anna Heringer
- 2021:** Sara Kulturhus by White Arkitekter
- 2022:** Reggio School by Andrés Jaque
- 2023:** Third Space by Studio Saar
- 2024:** Grand Palais renovation by Chatillon Architectes

Read more: Chatillon Architectes | France | Paris | Restorations | Renovations | Public and leisure | Paris 2024 Olympic Games | Architecture | 21st-Century Architecture

Subscribe to our newsletters

Email*

Next

Share and comment



10 comments

More

- Series
- Interviews
- Opinion
- Talks
- Videos
- Newsletters

Recommended stories



ARCHITECTURE

- 1 Project architect at XUL Architecture
- 2 Project architect at Third Space
- 3 Urban Designer at We Made That
- 4 Junior interior designer or interior architect at Yard Architects
- 5 Junior interior designer at F3 Architects

Eight homes with kitchens that double as partition walls



Eurostar "terminal of the future" unveiled in Amsterdam



London Design Festival guide 2025



Dezeen Jobs





Odami reinvents the "old-world apothecary" at Toronto's Living Beauty



Stefano Boeri Architetti completes Vertical Forest skyscraper in Utrecht



Stirling Prize-winning council homes sold off at a discount



670 Mesquit development by BIG approved for Los Angeles Arts District



Vinklu squeezes tiny cafe between buildings in Bucharest



Five striking Snøhetta buildings that you can walk all over



Vector Architects wins landmark architectural copyright infringement case in China

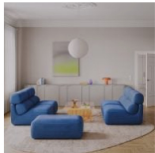


Giraffe stone wraps nonprofit building in Arkansas by Marlon Blackwell

Latest from Dezeen Showroom



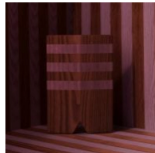
Slab seating collection by Jumphi Socharoenatham for Waste is More



Smooth sofa by Krystian Kowalski for Tylko



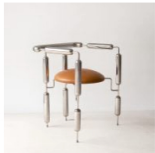
Original Modern Shelving by Tylko



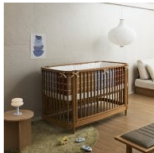
Wide Guy door pull by YSG for Bankston Architectural



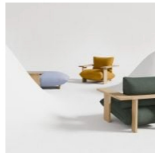
Pebble stool by Atelier2+ for Moonier



Poodle armchair by Mati Sipiora



Parry cot by Jitrin Jintaprecha for Mother Goose



Press armchair and bench by Studio Truly Truly for Design By Them

Comments

Visit our comments page | Read our comments policy

Comments on this entire site are premoderated (only moderators can see this message). [Change site settings.](#)

10 Comments

Dezeen



Join the discussion...

• Share

Best Newest Oldest



HeywoodFloyd

7 months ago

I feel like a restoration project, even one as beautiful as this, of such an epic building, is not really in the spirit of the century's most significant architecture.

2 1 Reply Share



BBOB

7 months ago edited

The building that LeCorbusier proposed to have demolished so he could build one of his modernist box buildings in its place.

2 1 Reply Share



TheTruth

8 months ago edited

An excellent choice, and one which recognizes the importance of continuity in cultural value systems. In its own right, the Grand Palais was a stunning structure, one which united then contemporary technology (wrought iron and glass), with a 2000 year old history (Roman and Greek architecture), albeit reinterpreted in the Beaux Arts style. Today that history is further valued and further reinforced by the creative but respectful restoration.

More than other worthy buildings that made the list, this selection most clearly recognized "architecture for the ages", and in that regard must surely be the best in the entire list.

1 1 Reply Share



Charles Brown

8 months ago

Wonderful restoration, although I wonder if most significant building of 1900 is more accurate. Next up, Notre Dame.

1 1 Reply Share



Marius

8 months ago edited

Well-deserved, great project. Very fine restoration work, flawlessly executed.

It was one of the best Beaux-Arts buildings, a true, not a social-media, influencer. Used some principles of French neoclassicism, and incorporated Renaissance and Baroque elements, but modern materials, had an innovative style with enormous influence in Europe and the Americas through the 19th and beginning of the 20th century and influenced the modern movements.

The huge restoration included upgrade of building services, but focused on turning the entire place to the public. Kudos.

0 1 Reply Share



Dik Coates

8 months ago edited

Another winner...all of them are excellent. I like the filigree, likely wrought iron. Beautiful work.

0 0 Reply Share



RR/RR

8 months ago edited

8 months ago edited

As you know, the hero of most of today's architects and the one that they still copy, Le Corbusier (a made up name btw.), was in the 1960s working towards demolishing this beautiful classically designed building and building one of his modernist buildings in it's place. The Grand Palais was only saved because of Le Corbusier's death.

Like Comment Reply Share



Dik Coates 7 months ago

Maybe his reputation was greater than his ability?

Like Comment Reply Share



weetbix 7 months ago



Like Comment Reply Share



Dik Coates 7 months ago

Yup... I remembered that after I had posted. God works in mysterious ways...

Like Comment Reply Share

Subscribe Privacy Do Not Sell My Data

DISQUS



Highlights

Helsinki architecture museum



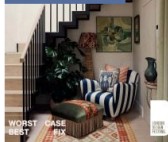
Paul Cockshedge LDF sculpture



NYC casino proposals



Dezeen at LDF



UK's longest railway bridge



Magazine
Awards
Jobs
Events Guide
Showroom
School Shows
Courses

Architecture
Interiors
Design
Technology

Series
Interviews
Opinion
Talks
Videos

Newsletters
Comments
Submit a story
Advertise
Privacy notice
Contact