

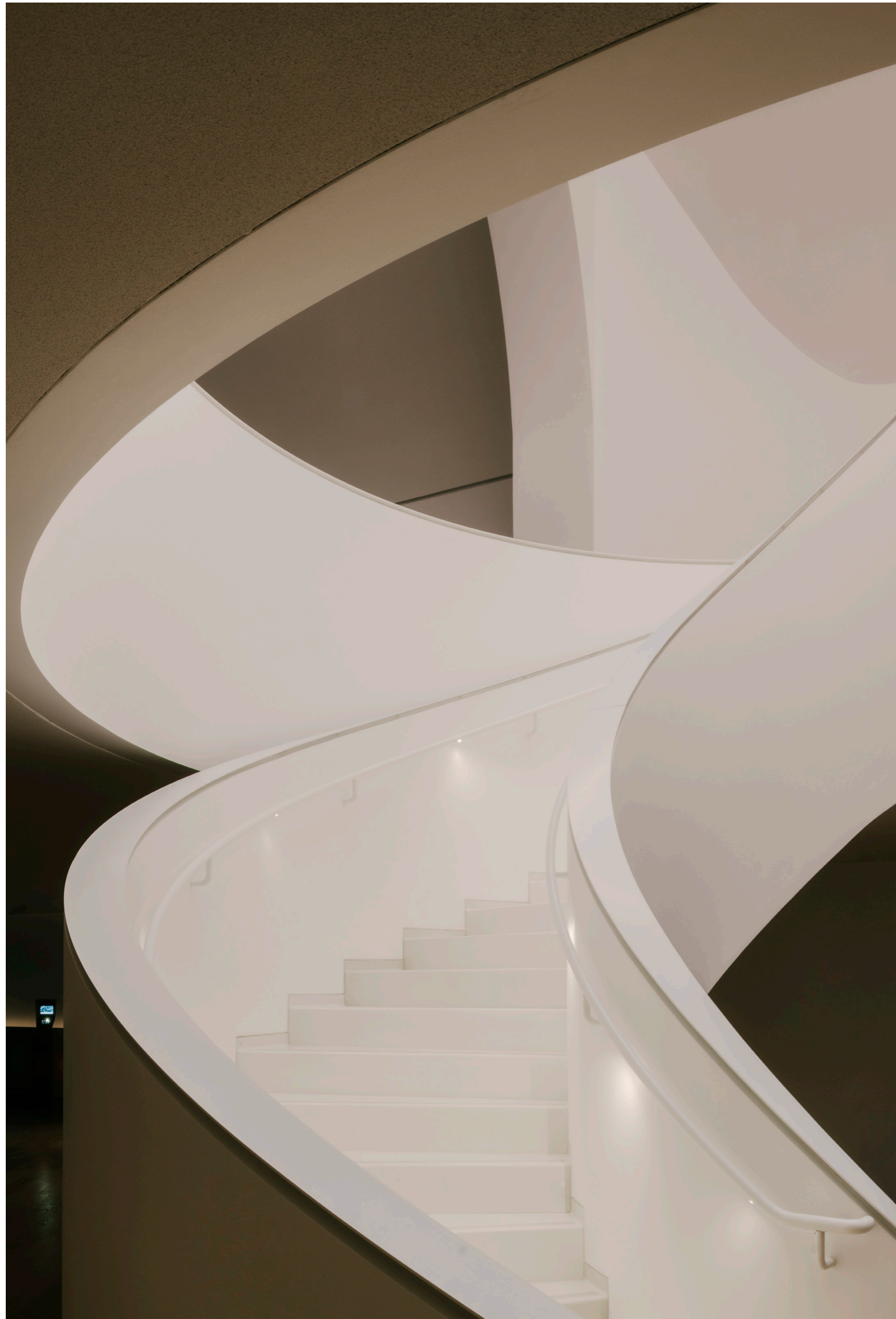
Musée national de la Marine Renovation 2016–2023





The design intent behind the renovation of the Musée national de la Marine by h2o architectes and Snøhetta was to rethink the organization within the museum's services to offer visitors and employees a functional environment for work, discovery, and exchange. The design of the new museum is characterized by curved and circular forms, in keeping with the existing geometry of the building and subtly referencing the natural movement of water. This dynamic architectural movement facilitates circulation and connectivity between spaces and encourages more fluid interaction.

Drawing from the building's different historical layouts, h2o architects and Snøhetta have restored the monumental volumes of the existing structure, creating ideal spaces for the newly imagined visitor experience and supplementary functions.



The ambition behind the renovation of the Musée national de la Marine in Paris was to rethink the organization and interrelationship of the various onsite activities to improve experiences for both staff and visitors. The museum is located in the historic Palais Chaillot, which was built in 1878 and subsequently restructured for the 1937 World's Fair and is protected by its heritage status. h2o architects and Snøhetta worked hand in hand in renovating the building by establishing a close dialogue between the building's successive construction states and a renewed, contemporary vision of the maritime world and its challenges.

The design of the new museum is characterized by curved and circular forms, consistent with the existing geometry of the building and subtly referencing the natural movement of water. Visitors are guided on an immersive and intuitive journey with several possible pathways. Like the ebb and flow of waves, the new visitor experience weaves together contemporary and existing elements, recounting the history of this prestigious institution with renewed vitality. The coexistence of historical and contemporary architecture carries the visitor's imagination beyond the walls of the museum to wider and more distant shores.

The visit begins in the intimate, quiet atmosphere of the vestibule, progressively immersing the visitor in the world of the museum before moving into the heart of the luminous, spacious full-height hall, from which one can directly access the museum's various services, such as exhibit space, restaurant, bookshop and boutique, seminar rooms, and auditorium. The play of transparency reveals the graceful curves of the Galerie Davioud – inspired by its 1937 layout – and provides a glimpse of the functions associated with the newly created mezzanine levels, including a pressroom, members' lounge, and exhibition space. A double wall creates a functional transitional space, housing technical devices required for exhibit installation and the thermal envelope.

The reopening of the historic staircase, which dates from the original 1878 project, streamlines the visitor experience by creating multiple possible pathways between the plaza and garden levels. The position of the building, nestled in the hillside between the Trocadero Plaza and Gardens, is revealed through punctual façade openings and the creation of an oculus in the end pavilion, which establishes a visual connection between the two levels.



A new era in the long history of the building

The starting point for this vast renovation project was the transformation of the 1878 Palais du Trocadéro into the Palais de Chaillot by Carlu, Boileau and Azéma for the 1937 World's Fair. The palace wing was enlarged for the occasion: a new gallery facing the gardens, the Carlu Gallery, was added to the original Davioud Gallery, and the entire interior was clad in a refined double wall, creating unified, monumental spaces within the eclectic architecture.

The current project establishes a delicate dialogue between the past and future of the museum, resonating with the building's history by reconstituting the exceptionally large and harmonious volumes of the 1937 galleries. In its new layout, the Musée national de la Marine houses its permanent collections on the two Gallery Davoud levels (ground floor and garden level) which stretch over 150 meters, while the new auditorium and temporary exhibits are housed in the Carlu Gallery, which is more open to the outside.

An architectural project in dialogue with the existing building and inspired by the maritime world

The museum's interior layout incorporates rounded forms into the graceful curves of the existing building, thereby defining a fluid, continuous experience that evokes the natural movements of water. Visitors are guided through an immersive and intuitive journey, with several different possible itineraries.

Like the ebb and flow of waves, the new visitor experience weaves together contemporary and existing elements, highlighting the history of the prestigious institution. The superposition of historical and contemporary architecture carries the visitor's imagination beyond the walls of the museum, to wider and more distant shores.





Pure volumes

The vestibule, with its mysterious and intimate atmosphere, marks the beginning of the entrance sequence, which continues into the full-height main hall where the Davioud Gallery – which features a succession of pure, simple volumes that emphasize the building’s scale – is gradually revealed. Meandering floor motifs draw visitors to different destinations along their journey.

The uninterrupted continuity of spaces and the play of transparencies reveal both the shape of the existing structures and the function of the new mezzanine spaces (pressroom, members’ lounge, exhibition space, etc.).





An intuitive journey

A streamlined visitor journey is created by reopening a historic staircase, which dates from the original 1878 project, and integrating it into both the temporary and permanent exhibit itineraries. These same spaces are punctually opened to the world outside, in keeping with the twofold aim of reconstituting the volumes of the 1937 design and of anchoring the museum in the surrounding environment.

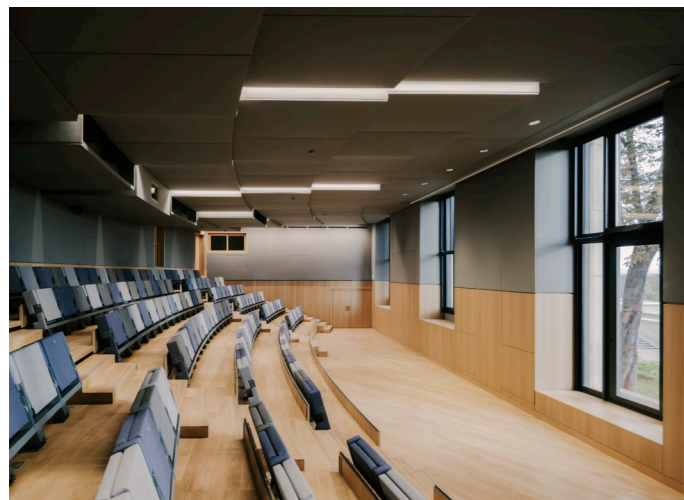
Award-winning museum and exhibition design practice Casson Mann has created an imaginative and accessible visitor experience for the Musée national de la Marine. With a vision to bring the sea to Paris, Casson Mann's scenography evolved in direct response to the extraordinary scale and fluidity of the museum's original curving galleries.

At the heart of the concept is a promenade of large-scale sculptural interventions that maintain a dramatic dialogue with the volumes they inhabit.

These landmarks – a ship's hull, a suspended shipping container and an enormous projected wave – create moments of high drama and interest, drawing visitors through the space.

In addition to the sculptural installations, visitors can enjoy thematic galleries that tell stories of human endeavor – commerce, sport, leisure, travel, war, peace, fear, loss and survival – subjects intensified by life at sea. The historic collections, comprising navigation devices, ship models, paintings and sculptures, are displayed to give visitors the closest possible engagement with the objects.

Designed to appeal to a wide audience, the installations, soundscapes and atmospheric lighting engage the senses, elevating the museum into an experiential adventure. The design achieves the highest standards of accessibility, with devices such as audio beacons, tactile orientation and guidance, ensuring enjoyment for all.





Getting your bearings

By reopening existing window frames, the project reinforces visual connection between the museum and its surroundings: the Eiffel Tower and the Trocadero Gardens are now visible from the exhibition spaces. The architectural project reincorporates the end pavilion at the midpoint of the visitor journey: it becomes the natural inflection point for the curved gallery.

The oculus, designed by Davioud for the 1937 project but never built, finally sees the light of day. With its impressive new height, the end pavilion creates a visual connection between the superposed gallery levels and highlights the 1878 vaulted ceiling, which has also been restored.



Depth: a functional double wall

One of the main challenges of the project was to anticipate how the proposed museum layout would function, which was outside the scope of the initial project and necessitated a separate contract. One solution found was to equip the windows in the exhibition spaces with motorized sheer and blackout curtains. Another was to integrate the equipment needed for exhibit installation as well as heating and ventilation systems into a double wall throughout the spaces. The thickness of the building envelope becomes a functional interstitial space, freeing the museum rooms from technical constraints without compromising the historical integrity of the edifice, which is a listed heritage building.

Diverse scales and viewpoints

The design of the Davioud Gallery mezzanines is the result of a careful dialogue with existing architectural elements that does not alter sightlines within the wide, generous spaces and maintains the visual continuity of the curved enfilade of the gallery. These same mezzanines serve as separations between the thematic spaces of the museum collections. Exceptional in size yet clad in simple forms, they offer an overhanging view of the galleries, framing new views of the renovated vaulted ceiling. Natural light is filtered through operable fins installed in the linear skylight.

User experience at the center of the new museum

At the heart of the new museum, visitors benefit from an enriched and renewed experience. The open, generous reception hall features mobile furniture that encourages users to make the space their own, while a pressroom and meditation area are now offered as part of the visitor experience.

In addition to the reception hall, the seminar rooms, foyer, and auditorium with retractable seating offer flexible, modular spaces capable of hosting a variety of event formats, playing an active part in the life of the museum by widening the scope of content that can be integrated into expositions. These spaces also have impressive views of the Trocadero Gardens and the Eiffel Tower.

The technical and administrative areas, also redesigned as part of the overhaul of the entire Musée national de la Marine, are carefully integrated within this vast complex, facilitating the day-to-day activities underlying the organization of exhibitions, events, and public offerings.





In 2016, the Musée national de la Marine and OPPIC (Opérateur du Patrimoine et des Projets Immobiliers de la Culture) launched an open call for bids for the renovation of the Musée National de la Marine. It was at this point that h2o architectes and Snøhetta met, and the two firms decided to compete together. The newly formed design team was selected from a pool of 117 applications.

The process began with two weeks of intensive project development based on the design brief: each firm analyzed all given information in order to identify the major challenges in the project, and each developed an initial architectural concept in response to the programmatic expectations and unique historical context.

At the end of this period, h2o architectes and Snøhetta assembled their work together over the two firms came together to compare, test, and combine their proposals to develop common visions and hypotheses, adapted to the scale and specific features of the museum. The project was a collaborative effort from the outset: the publicly accessible areas were developed through iterative work carried out in workshops in France and Norway.

The team was able to draw on the qualities and skillsets of each firm, applying a rigorous and historical approach to the project. After several volumetric insertion tests of the new programs, the preservation of the gallery space emerged as the solution best suited to the context of the operation. The existing building – with its grandeur, simplicity of treatment and spatial generosity – was the unifying element! The design was implemented through a project anchored in its site, making the most of its intrinsic qualities.

The clarity of the design approach, the streamlined visitor experience and the understanding of the challenges facing the museum of tomorrow expressed during the competition phase earned the Franco-Norwegian team the project commission.



h2o architectes, as mandated agent, oversaw the general design and construction supervision for the new spaces: reception, exhibition, catering, collection logistics and conservation areas, as well as the new auditorium and staff offices. The Paris-based firm also coordinated with the designated Architecte en Chef des Monuments Historiques (Principal Heritage Architect, a title given to a select few certified Heritage Architects in France) in charge of the building, and interfaced with museography and scenography, which were carried out under a separate contract.

Snøhetta focused on the design of the entrance sequence and the integration of the reception area and ticket office. During the construction phase, Snøhetta worked with h2o architectes to provide its expertise in the implementation of technical processes for certain elements of the building.



h2o architectes is a firm specialized in architectural, heritage and urban design and reconfiguration. It develops a variety of programs on different scales: housing, public spaces, new neighborhoods, work and educational environments, and cultural facilities.

h2o architectes was founded in 2005 by Charlotte and Jean-Jacques Hubert. Antoine Santiard joined as a partner in 2008. The firm was a winner of the Albums des Jeunes Architectes et Paysagistes (AJAP – Young Architects and Landscape Architects) competition the same year, nominated for the Équerre d'Argent prize for “First Project” in 2012 and awarded the «Europe 40 under 40» prize in 2014. In 2016, the three partners created Eugène Architectes du Patrimoine to address the challenges of restoring Heritage status buildings.

Faced with the complexity of the contexts addressed and their heritage or social characters, the firm has built an agile approach, capable of resolving situations in unique ways, through concerted action. Projects are designed to be open-ended, in a finely balanced dialogue with the history of the site, systematically questioned and always enriched.

Initial programs are questioned with the goal of transcending the initial commission and creating renewed sites that can be freely appropriated by their users. More than just spaces, h2o architectes constructs places to be enjoyed and experienced.

The firm’s work was the subject of the monograph *Ouvertures/Opening*, published in 2020 by Park Books.

Four Paris projects have also been published: the redevelopment of the Musée d’Art Moderne (Modern Modern, Park Books, 2019), solid-stone housing units on Avenue Félix Faure (Building with Limestone in Paris, Building Books, 2020), the redevelopment of Place de la Madeleine (Place-Making, at the Madeleine, Building Books, 2020) and the complete transformation of the Reuilly Barracks (De la caserne aux logements, Reuilly, Paris 12e (From Barracks to Housing, Reuilly Paris 12th), Pavillon de l’Arsenal, 2021).

“h2o architectes is delighted and proud to have worked with Snøhetta on the renovation of the Musée national de la Marine, the latest national museum in Paris to undergo a complete refurbishment. The location, collections and history of this museum provided us with a rich and complex existing context to reveal and project in a contemporary way.”

The work carried out by h2o and Snøhetta enabled us to create a sensitive articulation between past and future, all challenges that the world of the sea itself must face. The new museum, as much as the mission it embodies, is our common good to be shared. We are delighted that the public will be able to rediscover this universe at the heart of the galleries and collections.”

Antoine Santiard
Associate architect, h2o architectes



Snøhetta is a transdisciplinary practice that includes architecture, landscape architecture, interior architecture, art, product design, graphic and digital design, often integrating a combination of disciplines across its projects. From the beginning in Norway in 1989, Snøhetta's approach has been framed by environmental and cultural sensitivity, inspired by the Brundtland Commission's UN report on sustainability, released in 1987.

Snøhetta's first significant commission was Bibliotheca Alexandrina in 1989, reviving the ancient library in Alexandria, Egypt. This was followed by the Norwegian National Opera and Ballet in Oslo, the National September 11 Memorial Museum Pavilion, and the redesign of Times Square in New York, continued by projects on all scales around the world.

Today, Snøhetta has over 350 employees from 40 nations across nine regional studios spanning from Oslo to New York and San Francisco to Innsbruck, Paris, Adelaide, Melbourne, Hong Kong, and Shenzhen.

In France, Snøhetta completed the Lascaux IV International Centre of Parietal Art in 2016 and opened a studio in Paris in 2018, where 30 architects, landscape architects, and designers now compose a multidisciplinary team with experience of the French context while being anchored in Snøhetta's overall values and identity. In 2020, the studio delivered the Le Monde Group's new headquarters and the renovation

of the Musée Carnavalet in 2021. Since then, the Paris studio has been working on a variety of projects, including the rehabilitation of the Théâtre des Amandiers in Nanterre and Lille's Natural History Museum, and the construction of the planetarium and observatory in Douai. The studio is also set to create the National Court of Asylum in Montreuil and the Euraénergie energy hub in Dunkirk, as well as urban landscaping projects such as the comprehensive redevelopment of Boulevard de la Croisette in Cannes.

"Snøhetta is honored to have contributed to the reinvention of the iconic Musée National de la Marine and the renewal of its important heritage of France's relationship with the world's oceans, which ultimately connect us all."

The collaboration with h2o architectes and their understanding of French history and built heritage has been a true source of inspiration.

We now look forward to seeing the public make the museum's spaces their own and rediscover the vast collections that the institution houses. This will reaffirm the museum's important role in creating a contemporary perception of history, providing a deeper perspective on the future."

Kjetil Trædal Thorsen
Founding Partner and Architect, Snøhetta



Scenography

Award-winning museum and exhibition design practice Casson Mann has created an imaginative and accessible visitor experience for the musée national de la Marine.

With a vision to bring the sea to Paris, Casson Mann's scenography evolved in direct response to the extraordinary scale and fluidity of the museum's original curving galleries.

At the heart of the concept is a promenade of large-scale sculptural interventions that maintain a dramatic dialogue with the volumes they inhabit. These landmarks – a ship's hull, a suspended shipping container, an enormous wave, and the luminous gilt ornamentation La Réale – create moments of high drama and immersive experiences, drawing visitors through the space.

In addition to the sculptural installations and immersive media projections, visitors can enjoy thematic galleries that weave together historic collections and digital interactives with stories of human endeavour – commerce, sport, leisure, travel, war, peace, fear, loss and survival.

Designed to appeal to a wide audience, the installations, soundscapes and atmospheric lighting engage the senses, elevating the museum into an experiential adventure that achieves the highest standards of accessibility, ensuring enjoyment for all.

Fact sheet

Location	Paris, France
Address	Palais de Chaillot, 17 place du Trocadéro et du 11 Novembre 75016
Client	Musée National de la Marine OPPIC-Opérateur du Patrimoine et des Projets Immobiliers de la Culture
Ground surface	9 000 m ²
Status	Completed
Project duration	2016 - 2023
Opening date	November 17, 2023
Architect	h2o architectes-Snøhetta
Interior architect	h2o architectes-Snøhetta
Scenography	Casson Mann
Collaborators	
Construction economist	VPEAS
Structural design	Équilibre Structures
HVAC engineer, systems engineer, sustainability consultant for operations and maintenance	IGREC Ingénierie
Lighting designer	Agence ON
Acoustical engineering	Impédance ingénierie
Project Management Monuments Historiques	Lionel Dubois and Pierre Bortolussi
Fire safety and accessibility consultant	Casso & Associés
Scenography of the auditorium	Scenevolution

Media

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Press kit and photography	snohetta.prezly.com
Photography	Maxime Verret

About Musée national de la Marine

1748 is the date assigned to the origin of the collection: the encyclopaedist and naval inspector Henri-Louis Duhamel du Monceau offered King Louis XV the collection of models of ships and harbour machinery that he had assembled in the arsenals. Installed in 1752 on the first floor of the Louvre near the room of the Academy of Sciences, the "Salle de Marine", which is technical in nature, was designed to teach students at the naval engineering school.

In 1801, a short-lived naval gallery was set up within the new Ministry of the Navy, in the Hôtel de la Marine on Place de la Concorde. Views of French ports, painted by Joseph Vernet between 1754 and 1765, were displayed alongside models and technical objects.

In 1827, the Naval Museum was relocated to the Louvre, where it brought together collections that had been dispersed among the arsenals and official palaces, while rooms were created within the arsenals themselves, in Cherbourg, Brest, Lorient, Rochefort and Toulon. Throughout the 19th century, the museum maintained a technical and historical dimension, with models of old and contemporary ships, as well as paintings and works of art chosen for their historical value. The ethnographic dimension is provided by the collections produced by exploration missions and colonial expeditions (the Ministries of the Navy and the Colonies were one and the same until 1893). Admiral Pâris, director of the museum from 1871 to 1893, a member of the Académie des Sciences and founder of nautical ethnography, built up a collection of almost 400 models of traditional boats from Europe and, above all, Asia and Oceania, which remains unrivalled anywhere in the world. Considered the sixth department of the Louvre, the naval museum covers 2,000 m² in 19 rooms.

The museum, which had been attached to the Ministry of the Navy since 1919, moved to the new Palais de Chaillot, built for the 1937 Universal Exhibition of Arts and Techniques in Modern Life. Its collections, sheltered on the eve of the war, were moved to the Passy wing of Chaillot in 1942.

