Dominique Perrault - The Bibliothèque nationale de France
Portrait of a project 1988 - 1998

The Bibliothèque nationale de France has given its architect Dominique Perrault ‘carte blanche’ to develop an exhibition dedicated to the building he designed in 1989: with an original ‘mise en abyme’, a large-scale scenography presents the story of the conception and construction of the BnF, one of the most important contemporary public buildings in France.

“I wish to be launched the construction and fitting-out of the – or one of the – biggest libraries in the world, of a completely new type.” announced François Mitterrand, the then President of the French Republic on July 14th 1988.

In 1989, architect Dominique Perrault, aged only 36, was the winner of the international competition. After the Grand Louvre, the Opéra Bastille or the Institut du monde arabe, this new project located outside of Paris historical districts completed the policy of large public works projects led during the two seven-year terms of François Mitterrand. The architect’s mission was to create ‘a symbolic place for Paris and a library for France’, a place open to all, which is both a public area for passing through and the beginning of an initiatory journey.

The project, which was innovative because of its architecture and its urban settlement, was the founding act of the development of a new neighborhood of Paris. It was also a fundamental creation in the practice of Dominique Perrault and the first example of a ‘Groundscape’ architecture: an architecture considering the underground space as a new field of research to redefine the nature of the urban territories and to outline a new form of urban life.

In 2018, the Research Library celebrates the 20th anniversary of its full public opening. On this occasion, the exhibition entrusted to Dominique Perrault by Laurence Engel, President of the BnF, presents for the first time the history and evolution of this emblematic building recently labeled as ‘outstanding contemporary building’. It goes back over a creation process imbued with intense and fruitful debates between 1988 and 1998, with the involvement of numerous collaborators and with the various experiments that punctuated its conception and achievement.

The exhibition path, divided in four major sections, invites visitors to discover the unknown secrets of the whole project, from its architecture to its urban settlement, from the creation of the garden to the various
furniture elements. The original scenography - an open plan environment made of hanging mesh strips and immersive screenings which creates special light effects responds to the architectural elements and the specific furniture of the BnF. Some outstanding pieces and documents express a turning point in the history of architecture and construction, and illustrate a very large-scale work. Original films, sketches, plans and models from the architect’s archives and various public collections allow to take a fresh look at this building which is a true symbol of the Parisian contemporary architecture.

Exhibition

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10 april I 22 july 2018

Gallery 2
BnF I François-Mitterrand
Quai François Mauriac, Paris XIIIe

Tuesday to saturday 10 a.m. – 7 p.m.
Sunday 1 p.m. – 7 p.m.
Closed Mondays and public holidays
Price : 9 euros, reduced price : 7 euros
FNAC reservation : 0892 684 694 / www.fnac.com

Organizers
Dominique Perrault, architect, member of the Institut
Scientific director :
Frédéric Migayrou
deputy director of the National Museum of Modern Art, Pompidou Center
Scénography :
Gaëlle Lauriot-Prévost
architect designer, art director associated to Dominique Perrault Architecture
Audiovisuel director :
Richard Copans, director and producer, Les Films d’ici

Press contact
Claudine Hermabessière, head of Press Office
claudine.hermabessiere@bnf.fr - 01 53 79 41 18 - 06 82 56 66 17
Hélène crenon, press officer
helene.crenon@bnf.fr - 01 53 79 46 76

Visuels
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