

JB Blunk



Press kit

Continuum
08.06 – 29.12.2024

Shield, Bizen Vase 1953, © Daniel Dent. Courtesy JB Blunk Estate

Exhibition
Free Admission
16, Avenue Paul Firino Martell
16100 Cognac

Fondation
d'entreprise
Martell

JB Blunk

Continuum

June 8 – December 29, 2024

The Fondation d'entreprise Martell is delighted to present the **first retrospective exhibition in Europe** of the American sculptor **JB Blunk** (James Blain Blunk, 1926-2002), organized in collaboration with his daughter Mariah Nielson, director of the JB Blunk Estate, with contributions from Anne Dressen, curator at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris.

The exhibition **CONTINUUM** offers an immersion into the work of JB Blunk, unknown to the general public but iconic for many artists, for whom he remains a source of inspiration. The exhibition presents a vast collection of pieces created by Blunk, allowing viewers to grasp his unique and unconventional approach: whether creating works of art or everyday objects, his work - in constant dialogue with his environment - is a powerful plea, placing creation at the heart of everyday life.

Blunk drew his inspiration from his relationship with the nature surrounding him daily: located near the small town of Inverness, California, on an exceptional site in the heart of the forest and close to the Pacific coast. Throughout his life, the artist was dedicated to creating in deep connection with his environment, utilizing the natural resources around him (sequoia stumps and driftwood, earth, stones, etc.) to craft pieces, reconnecting with ancestral forms of expression and playing with scales ranging from modest to monumental.

A selection of over 150 pieces including sculptural works, ceramics, furniture, models, paintings, sketches, and original photographs drawn from both the JB Blunk Estate and private collections illustrates the breadth of his artistic practice, at the intersection of art and craftsmanship. The exhibition includes Blunk's earliest known ceramic vessel made in Los Angeles while a student at UCLA in the 1940s, as well as a collection of maquettes which have rarely been seen by the public until now. Additionally, letters, works on paper and other ephemera drawn from family archives shed light on the artist's ways of working, his personal and professional connections, as well as his sources of inspiration, whether from early civilizations, different approaches to spirituality, or his pioneering vision in ecology.

A new film commissioned for the occasion captures the multiple facets of the house and studio that the sculptor built entirely by hand, from the architectural structure to the furniture, including tableware, switches, and even a fully sculpted sink. Mainly made from salvaged materials, the Blunk House, emblematic of his practice and mindset, is considered his major work of total art. The short films aim to convey the unique environment in which Blunk lived with his family near the wild coast of Point Reyes in Northern California. A second new film presents a selection of four monumental works installed in the San Francisco region: carved from blocks of giant

sequoia, these public seating sculptures in urban spaces testify to another aspect of Blunk's work.

The exhibition spans 900m2 and approaches Blunk's work through 6 thematic sections - Japan, Landscape, Home, Archetypes, Process and Public Projects - presenting his holistic approach to design, art, and architecture. Just as Blunk did not delineate between his life and work, the exhibition sections are intertwined and porous, giving the visitor the experience of his different methods, materials, and inspirations as he experienced them: in constant, insistent conversation with each other. The scenography was specially designed by designer Martino Gamper in collaboration with graphic designer Kajsa Ståhl (Åbäke).

"By unveiling the little-known work of an artist celebrating the power of nature, life, and creation at the intersection of disciplines, this retrospective aligns with the Foundation's ambition to encourage the emergence of innovative artistic approaches focused on the ecological transformation of territories and our ways of life."

Anne-Claire Duprat,

Director of the Fondation d'entreprise Martell

My way of working, the core of all my sculpture, is a theme, the soul of the piece. Sometimes it is evoked by the material, sometimes it is an idea or concept in my own mind. It is always present, regardless of the material, size or scale of what will be the finished piece. On occasions, when I work with found objects, the object itself evokes the theme. In these cases, I do very little to change it. One could say the theme is recognized. In carving wood, it is a matter of revealing the theme and is achieved by removing material. Since I principally use a chainsaw to do this, it is a process that moves quickly.

At times cutting away and forming happen so fast it is almost unconscious. The fact of working with a tool that is dangerous affects the manner of shaping the piece. The esthetic process is balanced with extreme awareness and attention to safety. Often, as I uncover more of the form, I encounter unexpected qualities, faults or voids in the wood that may change my intention, and sometimes the theme itself. This is a satisfying and exciting aspect of working on large pieces.... the fact that both my idea of what I want the piece to be, its own intrinsic theme, and the dictates of the finished object, be it chair, table, bench or sculpture, need to be accommodated. Sculpting stone is very different. It is deliberate, much slower, and not as likely to offer the unexpected as wood. Overall, it is difficult to explain a way of working that even for me, the person doing it is inexplicable. I suppose one could say I enter into a relationship with the material I am using, and as in all relationships there opportunities for surprise.

JB Blunk, 5 novembre 1998



Blunk House, Inverness, CA. © Leslie Williamson. Courtesy JB Blunk Estate

Continuum



JB Blunk in his studio, 1995 © Jan Watson. Courtesy JB Blunk Estate

CONTINUUM is the first exhibition in Europe showcasing the work of American artist JB Blunk (James Blain Blunk, 1926–2002), a sculptor who combined art and craftsmanship, drawing inspiration from his deep and daily bond with nature.

Blunk began making work in the 1940s with the momentous discovery of Japanese ceramics, specifically the work of Japanese potter Shoji Hamada, while he was still a student at the University of California, Los Angeles. Drafted during the Korean War in 1951, he was determined to stay in Asia. He settled in Japan in 1952 and familiarized himself with Japanese ceramic techniques. In 1958, he settled in Northern California, where he built his home and studio, an entire work of art in itself.

Throughout his life, Blunk endeavored to establish a connection with the elements of nature and **landscape**, reviving ancestral and **archetypal** expressions. He did this with a simplicity that did not, however, exclude the monumentality of commissioned artworks for **public projects**.

His creations – carved in wood, ceramic, or stone, regularly coupled with painting, drawing, and jewelry – form a constellation of artworks combining different scales and creative **processes**. Leaving chance to do its work, with close attention to materials, Blunk went beyond all the usual dichotomies, refusing to choose between abstraction and figuration, hand and machine. Forever seeking to blend art and life, his artworks also reconcile the principles of feminine and masculine, sacred and profane.

While his Japanese aesthetics are reminiscent of artists of his generation (his elders Henry Moore, Isamu Noguchi, Constantin Brâncuși, and – more indirectly – Peter Voulkos, Lucio Fontana, and the land artists), Blunk's life was relatively far removed from the mainstream culture, without being cut off from the world and the issues of his time. Besides his recurring stays in Japan, his art was also shaped by several trips to Indonesia, Mexico, and Peru, as well as Carnac in Brittany, anchoring it in a broader universal history.

A figure of an alternative modernism rather than counterculture, Blunk was a humanist, a pioneer in his early sensitivity to ecology. His artworks are undeniably contemporary and celebrate the force of nature and life, which he invites us to treat with respect and humility, as he himself does.

Japan

In 1948, Blunk discovered the work of ceramist Shoji Hamada, the master of *Mingei*¹, while studying at the University of California, Los Angeles with artist Laura Andreson. Japanese Bizen pottery – fired with a wood kiln and unenameled – marked a decisive turning point in his life and his art. He decided to pursue this passion by going back to its origins.

While serving in the army during the Korean War, in 1951, he traveled to Tokyo on leave, where by chance he met the artist Isamu Noguchi and his wife. Won over by Blunk's enthusiasm, Noguchi introduced him to master potter and Japanese National Treasure Kitaōji Rosanjin, and Blunk decided to stay in Japan.

In 1953, after spending four months in Rosanjin's workshop, he became the apprentice of another master potter and National Treasure, Toyo Kaneshige. This is when his training really began. In Imbe, the ceramic area in Bizen Province, he learned to extract his own clay from the ground, and to fire it in kilns inspired by those used in the 16th century. This experience had an effect that was both aesthetic and spiritual, influencing his work and his entire existence.

Practicing ceramics taught him to respect the elements – earth, water, air, and fire – and also to welcome the hazards that are inherent in the technique, rather than trying to have complete control over his environment. Through this teaching, albeit rigorous, he learned patience and endurance.

Blunk's early works (ikebana vases, incense holders, wash paintings, and inks on rice paper) clearly reference Japanese culture, prefiguring his later artworks, which are more directly related to nature. artworks, which are more directly related to nature.

During these few years, he also appeared in an official film presenting Japan abroad, and exhibited his first creations at the Chuo-Koron Gallery in Tokyo, before returning to Los Angeles. Only a vase and a few rare ceramics and archival photos remain from this time.

He returned to Japan several times. Shinto aesthetics and philosophy, with an animist dimension, influenced him throughout his life. The totemic sculpture *Presence* is one of its many incarnations.



JB Blunk, *Shield*, Bizen Vase 1953 © Daniel Dent. Courtesy JB Blunk Estate



JB Blunk, *Untitled* © Daniel Dent. Courtesy JB Blunk Estate

1. *Mingei* – derived from “minshu” (people) and “koge” (craftsmanship), is a philosophical movement that was created in 1925 in Japan, in response to increasing urbanization and Western industrialization. Celebrating popular craftsmanship (in ceramic, wood, lacquer, ironwork, basketry, and textile) for its simple and accessible beauty, as well as its usage value, the *mingei* influence is reflected in all of Blunk's artworks.

Landscape

Whether in Bizen during his apprenticeship, or in Northern California, Blunk's aesthetics and practice were continually shaped by the environment and landscape where he found and collected his materials.

The magnificent spectacle of nature made him sensitive to the infinitely large and the infinitely small, such as the ocean and cliffs just a few kilometers from Inverness, as well as hills and forests where diverse species of trees (oaks, pine bishops and sequoias), sometimes thousands of years old, co-exist. Wood was his main raw material, first of all for the construction of his house, then for his sculptures. He salvaged thousand-year-old tree stumps and trunks that were destined for destruction by local logging companies. He also collected driftwood and sea-polished stones, which he arranged and carved in the form of small poetic sculptures, and created sawdust-based paintings. His two and three-dimensional pieces composed of natural elements allude to the surrounding landscape and the cycles of nature, through their material character or their iconography, such as the topography (topography of a garden in low relief, or the imprint of the rings of the wood depicting the passage of time and seasons).

Next to the house, Blunk and his first partner, Nancy Waite Harlow, maintained both a small Zen garden and a vegetable garden to ensure a certain amount of self-sufficiency for their family. The Blunk library contains several important works connecting nature and politics, such as *Walden* by libertarian author Thoreau or the Earthsea cycle, Ursula Le Guin's science fiction masterpiece. Blunk's references to landscape were, however, always more poetic than literal. For Blunk, art does not represent nature, but instead embodies it.



JB Blunk, *Garden*, 1975. © Daniel Dent. Courtesy JB Blunk Estate

Home

A few years after returning to the US, Blunk settled in the West Marin area, north of San Francisco. Blunk had the artist Noguchi to thank for a new decisive encounter, when Noguchi introduced him to the British surrealist painter Gordon Onslow Ford and his wife, Jacqueline Johnson. They shared a common interest in Japanese aesthetics and philosophy. In the summer of 1958, Blunk helped Onslow Ford and Johnson build the curved roof of their house above the town of Inverness. In return, Onslow Ford and Johnson invited Blunk and his first partner, Nancy Waite Harlow, to choose a piece of land on their vast property in order to settle there. The young couple seized this opportunity. Creative and determined, they spent three years salvaging all the materials they needed to build the house and the studio.

The simplicity of the house, built entirely by their hands, is reminiscent of those built by American pioneers, yet also reflects Japanese aesthetics, blending perfectly into the landscape. The orientation and location of each window emphasizes and frames the beauty of the mountain ridge in the distance and the valley below. The dim light expresses a kind of praise for the shadows, and its ambiance is both rustic and warm.²

This all-encompassing work of art, changing and evolving, in return inspired his work and is still the home of his family today. Blunk also furnished the interior, sculpting niches and sinks, and creating tableware and furniture. He also made jewelry for his loved ones, as well as many functional sculptures.

Blunk had a tendency to say "I just do it, that's all"³, even before the trend emerged for alternative houses (sometimes referred to as «woodbutcher's art») endorsed by his friend and architect Sim van der Ryn. Forever focusing on quality over quantity, the "do-it-yourself" attitude was obvious to him, an implicit criticism of the race towards consumerism that began at the same time.



The Blunk House, Inverness, CA. © Leslie Williamson. Courtesy JB Blunk Estate

2. Jun'ichirō Tanizaki, *In Praise of Shadows*, (Leete's Island Books, First Edition, 1977).

3. JB Blunk quoted by Olivia H. Emery in *Craftsman Lifestyle: Gentle Revolution* (California Design Publications, 1977), p. 177).



The Blunk House, Inverness, CA. © Leslie Williamson.
Courtesy JB Blunk Estate



The Blunk House, Inverness, CA. © Leslie Williamson.
Courtesy JB Blunk Estate

Archetypes

Whether made of clay, wood, stone or bone, Blunk's artworks convey a timeless power. In Inverness, he lived surrounded by dense forests and ancient streams for which he had immense respect. He collected stones and small mammal bones. By paying attention to their intrinsic qualities, through subtle assemblies, he was able to create sculptures and objects that are full of meaning.

The abstract and suggestive simplicity of a tree trunk or the archaic roughness of clay blend together with non-Western arts and cultures that worship fertility and the spirits of nature. His works include many references both to time and space: from prehistoric Japanese Jōmon pottery to European dolmens or Indian lingams, from the rock paintings of the Chumash American Indians to those on sand by Australian Aborigines, from the stylized figurines of the Cyclades to North American prehistoric birdstones, or animist totems from American Indian art to African statuary and furniture. Blunk's works create a dialogue with each beholder by stimulating our tendency to recognize figures, bodies, and landscapes. Blunk saw art as part of a bigger, "magical" process. For him, magic was "the mystery and process of life."

Besides being sensitive to the vitalist and holistic approach of Jungian psychoanalysis, and although he did not take part in the new age or hippie movements as such, for many years Blunk kept a record of his dreams in notebooks, in search of his own truth in the world.



JB Blunk, *Penis Stool #1*, c.1975 © Daniel Dent. Courtesy JB Blunk Estate

Process

Blunk built his studio just a few meters from his house. He was intensely disciplined in maintaining his daily practice, working all day long, stopping only for a brief lunch and his afternoon tea.

He began to carve wood in 1962. "I knew how to use a chainsaw and it was one of those things. One day you just start", he recalls.⁴

Between working on commissions and exhibitions, he attached great importance to play and experimentation, appreciating chance discoveries and accidents, somewhat pragmatically. In this way, Blunk built a wood-fired kiln made of earth. However, the kiln did not function properly so he ended up firing his ceramics using an electric kiln in his studio.

Whether he shaped clay with his hands, cut wood with a chainsaw, tried his hand at weaving, or made jewelry, Blunk's practice used a vocabulary of diverse forms.

Although his best-known works of art are monumental – such as his home in Inverness and his public sculptures and seating installations – Blunk often worked on a smaller scale, using objects and materials that he collected from nature. He often modeled sketches or sculptures out of redwood for special commissions, and their shapes inspired him to create large sculptures as well as household objects. The treatment of his sculptures varies between a raw rendering (*Scrap Chair*) and a perfectly executed finish (*Continuum*).

Working on a small scale could also be a means of returning to a particularly interesting shape, such as a keyhole pattern, an irregular and dynamic circle, or self-piercing shapes.

To create his large sculptures, Blunk did not work alone. His assistant and friend Rick Yoshimoto helped him with the complex implementation of his ideas. Together, they also regularly organized ceramic "biennial" exhibitions at the Dance Palace Community Center in Point Reyes Station. In addition, Blunk organized «Family Shows,» where his children and his partner, Christine Nielson, displayed their creations. Blunk participated in major professional group shows such as *Objects USA* in 1969.

Blunk was able to say, "I enter into a relationship with the material I am using, and as in all relationships, there are opportunities for surprise".⁵

4. JB Blunk quoted by Olivia H. Emery, *Craftsman Lifestyle: Gentle Revolution* (California Design Publications, 1977), p. 176.

5. Statement by JB Blunk dated November 5, 1998, reproduced in *Woodwork Magazine*, October 30, 1999.



JB Blunk working on *Santa Cruz (Blunk's Hunk)*, 1968 © Geoffrey Fulton. Courtesy JB Blunk Estate



JB Blunk, *Self-Piercing Element (Hummingbird/#4 Arch)*, 1976. Courtesy JB Blunk Estate



JB Blunk, *Untitled*, c. 1980 © Angus Mill. Courtesy JB Blunk Estate



JB Blunk, *Untitled*, c. 1990 © Daniel Dent. Courtesy JB Blunk Estate

Public Projects

Blunk regularly created pieces commissioned for public spaces. These practical sculptures were intended as both collective seating and relational installations, often sculpted from a single piece of redwood, one of Northern California's main wood species. Examples include *The Planet* (1969), his best-known work of art, created for the Oakland Museum of California, and *Santa Cruz, (Blunk's Hunk)* (1968), which he made for University of California, Santa Cruz, as well as *The Magic Boat* (1979) produced for the Orientation Center for the Blind. He also created *Greens* (1978), the large sculptural table at one of the first vegetarian restaurants in San Francisco, and *Six Stones* (1993–94) for Stanford University. There are at least seventeen public commission projects in total, scattered across different regions of the United States, although most of them are located in Northern California.

As always, Blunk allowed the natural characteristics of each tree trunk – its rings, knots, folds, curves, and roots – to guide his movements and determine his cuts.

Often designed for urban contexts, Blunk's public sculptures, which are more widely accessible and engaging than industrial designs from the same period, are aimed at an intergenerational audience – adults, students, teenagers, and children – offering everyone the chance to enjoy a sensory experience. Blunk invites us to take part in the tactile and physical encounter of sitting within his sculptures, or even climbing on them. The artist Charles Ray describes the users of Blunk's sculptures as "monkeys in the trees," and adds, "when I sit on a stump [...], I'm in two places simultaneously», here, and down there, in nature.⁶

With his artworks, we can converse, we can rest, but we can also observe the world around us, with which we form an inseparable whole.



JB Blunk working on Santa Cruz (Blunk's Hunk), 1968. © Geoffrey Fulton. Courtesy JB Blunk Estate.

6. Charles Ray in the exhibition catalog JB Blunk, Blum & Poe, Los Angeles, March 12–May 15, 2010



JB Blunk, Greens, 1979, Redwood, Greens Restaurant, San Francisco. Courtesy JB Blunk Estate

JB Blunk Estate

The JB Blunk Estate, based in Inverness, California, is dedicated to preserving the work and legacy of the late artist JB Blunk. Through exhibitions and publications, as well as tours of Blunk's iconic hand-built home in Inverness, the Estate expands knowledge of Blunk's works and way of working.

Blunk Space, in nearby Point Reyes Station, is an associated gallery dedicated to contemporary artists and designers who are engaging with Blunk's oeuvre and methods.

Blunk is represented by BLUM (Los Angeles, New York, Tokyo), Kasmin (New York), and Kate MacGarry (London). His work has been exhibited widely, including a retrospective exhibition at the Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, CA (2018), and a two-person show with sculptor Alma Allen at the Palm Springs Art Museum, Palm Springs, CA (2018). A major monograph on the artist was published in 2020 by Blunk Books and Dent-De-Leone, now in its third edition. Blunk's work is in public collections worldwide, including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; M+ Museum, Hong Kong, China; Museum of Arts and Design, New York, NY; Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, CA; and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA, and in numerous prestigious private collections.



JB Blunk working in his studio, Inverness, California, 1968. © Mimi Rogers. Courtesy JB Blunk Estate

Biographies

Mariah Nielson

Director of JB Blunk Estate and of Blunk Space

Mariah Nielson (b. 1978) is an architect, curator and design historian. As the daughter of the pioneering American artist JB Blunk, her holistic approach was influenced by growing up in the Blunk House, the home he built by hand with salvaged materials in Inverness, CA. She was a curator at the Museum of Craft and Design, San Francisco, from 2009–2011 and director of the JB Blunk Residency from 2007–2011. In 2013, she completed an MA in Design History at the Royal College of Art and the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, under the direction of Glenn Adamson. Her research focused on how the economy shaped the practices of architectural representation in London in the 1970s.

Mariah is currently the Director of the JB Blunk Estate, preserving and researching his practice, and Director of Blunk Space, an art and design gallery dedicated to expanding Blunk's legacy by connecting his practice to that of contemporary artists all over the world. She is the editor of the first monograph about the artist, *JB Blunk*, which is now in its third edition. Recent curatorial projects include *Design is a State of Mind*, with Martino Gamper, Serpentine, London, 2015; *Blue Jeans & Brown Clay: Artists and Designers at the Blunk House*, Kate MacGarry, London, 2020; *JB Blunk: Muse*, Kasmin, New York, 2022; *Three Landscapes: JB Blunk, Anna and Lawrence Halprin*, Blum & Poe, Los Angeles, 2022; and *Same Blue as the Sky*, with Studio AHEAD, 2023. Recent talks include "Alma Allen and JB Blunk: In Conversation", Palm Springs Art Museum, 2018; "Design X Fashion," hosted by Sight Unseen, New York, 2017; "Visionary Wood: Northern California's Woodworking Renaissance, 1970-79", FOG, San Francisco, 2016; "Natural Instincts," at Design Miami/, presented by Birkenstock; "Managing an artist estate," at Kunst Meran, in Merano, Italy; and an interview with Dr. Bridget Harvey for the podcast Getting Making. Mariah and her work have been featured in influential publications such as The Financial Times, The New York Times, T Magazine, The Guardian, The World of Interiors, Architectural Digest, Cultured, Frieze, Apartamento and more. In 2023 Mariah was named as one of the 300 people defining America's creative landscape by Wallpaper* Magazine.

Martino Gamper

Designer

Martino Gamper OBE (b. 1971, Merano, Italy) lives and works in London. Starting as an apprentice with a furniture maker in Merano, Gamper went on to study sculpture under Michelangelo Pistoletto at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna. He completed a Masters in 2000 from the Royal College of Art, London, where he studied under Ron Arad.

Working across design and art venues, Martino Gamper engages in a variety of projects from exhibition design, interior design, one-off commissions and the design of mass-produced products for the cutting edge of the international furniture industry. Gamper has presented his works and projects internationally, including at the Sir John Soane Museum, London; MIMOCA, Japan; Palais de Tokyo, Paris; The Modern Institute, Glasgow; and Kunsthall Charlottenborg, Copenhagen. Along with numerous awards for his work, Gamper was awarded an OBE (Order of the British Empire) in 2023 for services to Design.

Kajsa Ståhl Åbäke

Kajsa Ståhl is a London-based graphic designer specializing in collaborative and cross-disciplinary projects that involve archives, collections, interviews, and travel and result in books, posters, catalogues, billboards, websites, identities, exhibitions and films. She is one fourth of graphic design collective Åbäke since 2000, and one fourth of publishing house Dent—De—Leone since 2007. Her deft treatment of materials, colors, words, fonts and sequence results in unique and expressive productions.

After studying with HC Ericsson in Sweden, she moved to London where she received her MA from the Royal College of Art. Already immersed in the world of architecture, her early projects involved collaborations with architects, writers, musicians, fashion designers and curators. Clients and collaborators at the moment include JB Blunk Estate, Nottingham Contemporary, Whitechapel Gallery, Linder, Anne Hardy, Martino Gamper, Francis Upritchard, Max Lamb, Maison Kitsuné and more.

Anne Dressen

Curator

Anne Dressen is a curator at ARC, the contemporary department of the Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris (MAMVP). She is currently pursuing a SACRe thesis at the École Normale Supérieure related to «how to conceive a museum of 'plural arts', more transversal and inclusive based on French public collections.»

Her exhibitions explore unofficial or peripheral artistic practices that go beyond the traditional definitions and category of fine arts, particularly around sound, video, copy and reproduction, female eroticism, as well as craftsmanship, decorative arts, and design, in relation with problematics embedded in cultural, colonial, and gender studies. Between 2013 and 2022, she curated a trilogy of exhibitions at the MAMVP aimed at addressing the boundaries and hierarchies between art, decorative arts, crafts, or design: DECORUM - Carpets and Tapestries by Artists (2013); MEDUSA, Jewelry and Taboos (2017); and THE FLAMES, The Age of Ceramics (2021-2022). Her latest project, «Transparencies» is currently presented at the Musée Yves Saint Laurent Museum, in Paris

As an educator, she also serves as an expert in numerous juries. She currently sits on the scientific boards of the Manufacture des Gobelins in Paris and the Musée des Tissus in Lyon, as well as at CRAFT in Limoges and on the board of directors of the FRAC Grand Large in Dunkirk and in the editorial committee of the Revue de Sèvres and the INHA journal, Perspectives. Additionally, she coordinates the acquisition committee for contemporary creation at the MAMVP.

Anne-Claire Duprat

Director of the Fondation d'entreprise Martell

Anne-Claire Duprat is an art historian, specializing in cultural policies, with 15 years of experience in the field of contemporary art. She has worked within institutions such as the Palais de Tokyo, the Jeu de Paume, the Frac Ile-de-France, as well as in the cultural services of the French Embassy in the United States. She has expertise in cultural policy and diplomacy, as well as in the field of international cooperation and professional networking. She took over the direction of the Martell Foundation in April 2022 and gave it a new direction focused on regenerative design.



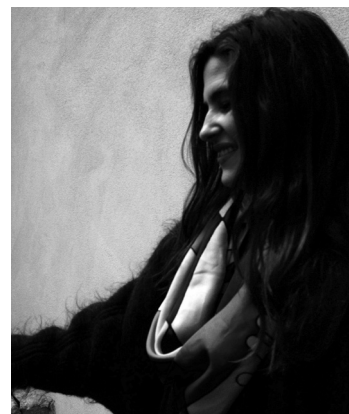
Mariah Nielson
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Martino Gamper
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Kajsa Ståhl
© Erika Wall



Anne Dressen
© Jeanne Graff



Anne-Claire Duprat
© Alexis Anice

About the Fondation d'entreprise Martell

Fondation d'entreprise Martell

Established in 2017, the Fondation d'entreprise Martell embarked on a new chapter in 2023 by reaffirming its commitment to creators eager to contribute to the ecological transition, the challenge of the century.

A firm believer that design and art are essential levers of transformation within society—whether by creating new imaginaries or coming up with new uses, the Foundation aims to support a new generation of creators who are sensitive to ecological and social issues, and are keen to develop resilient thinking and design in connection with territories.

Both a research and experimentation platform for designers, artists, and researchers, and a place for raising awareness and learning among the general public, its program, resolutely focused on the future, prioritizes supporting the emergence of innovative projects that pay attention to the living world and its regeneration. It is also aimed at paving new ways towards a sustainable future.

The program of exhibitions, residencies, conferences, and workshops encourage the development of thinking centered around the ecological transition of territories and our ways of life. It invites us, without boundaries, to interact in new ways with local resources and stakeholders.

The Residencies and the Almanach Lab

Every year, Fondation d'entreprise Martell launches a new call for applications to welcome creators to take up residencies focused on research, experimentation, prototyping, and production at its workshops in Cognac. The call for applications is open to all nationalities. It demonstrates the Foundation's desire to contribute towards the renewal of critical and practical design approaches by encouraging a new generation of committed creators. The grants and support are aimed at designers, artists, and researchers looking to develop resilient thinking and design that are sensitive to ecological and social issues, in connection with territories.

To support its future residents, in 2023 the Foundation decided to set up a knowledge base, the Almanach Lab, providing permanent access to an initial inventory of local, natural, and industrial resources, both material and immaterial, within its living archive.

Both a theoretical framework and a technical tool for designers in residence, the Almanach Lab accompanies research creation projects: focused on the ecological transformation of regions and our lifestyles. It invites us to interact, without boundaries, in new ways with local resources and stakeholders.

The participative dimension of the residencies sits at the heart of the Foundation's project. The creators in residence are invited to explore production and interdependency processes in an open and transdisciplinary way, to more effectively leverage their work to support transition. Thinking on

both a macro and a micro scale, with a view to sharing best practices is of course encouraged.

The living archive – a participatory archiving and transmission tool – will be supplemented over time by the projects and contributions of the creators in residence. It will combine contacts, expertise, the history of techniques, materials, prototypes... Designed as a starting point for understanding the issues at stake in the region, its aim is to inspire new discussions and collaborations on a local scale and beyond. Each residency gives rise to encounters with the general public where the results of the research carried out at the Foundation are presented.

Partnership with the Agora du design

Since 2023, the Martell Foundation is a partner of the Agora du Design, French association. It supports the laureates of this biennial grant by hosting them in residencies within its workshops, where they benefit from the necessary resources to conceive and realize their projects. The Foundation also promotes their work during «Agora du Design» exhibitions, in emblematic venues of creation both in France and internationally. This initiative aims to provide a platform for visibility to young designers, thus facilitating the dissemination of their ideas and creations to a wider and more diverse audience.

History of the building

Established in 2017, Fondation d'entreprise Martell is located on the historic site of Maison Martell, in the Gâtébourse building, at the heart of Cognac in the Nouvelle Aquitaine region. Built in 1929, the 5,000 m² Bauhaus-style building was originally an industrial production site which housed the company's bottling lines until 2005. Marking the occasion of Maison Martell's 300th anniversary, the company wanted to give its new Foundation a cultural and social mission. The first spaces opened in 2018 and the building renovations were completed in 2020. Since 2024, the Foundation has been carrying out its activities in all the areas that it occupies: exhibitions on the ground floor and second floor, workshops on the first floor, the Almanach Lab and experimentation platform on the second floor.

All About the Exhibition & Related Events

Find the entire program on the Foundation's website:
fondationentreprisemartell.com/en

ORDINARY EXTRA !

Every year, the Foundation designs a playful and creative program aimed at young audiences to extend the visit of the exhibitions with their families during each school holiday, as well as initiation workshops throughout the year.
Free upon online reservation.

Visits

The exhibitions are free and open to the public.
The Foundation offers various guided tour formats, by reservation. The team of mediators is available in the space to answer questions and engage in dialogue about the artworks. A bilingual visitor guide, for adults and children, is available as a complement.

Meetings and Conferences

Throughout the year, the Foundation offers meetings echoing the exhibitions. Post residence events allow for direct exchanges with the artists, designers, and researchers who share their creative processes with the public.

Off-site Events

The Foundation occasionally organizes off-site events to promote its initiatives in France and internationally.

School Visits

Every Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, the Foundation offers visits and workshops to all teachers, partners, or social field stakeholders who wish to come in groups. By promoting artistic discovery and exchange between participants and mediators, various formats and approaches are offered to meet the needs of teachers. The visit can therefore be tailored, upon request.

Students are accompanied by guided tours of the exhibitions by mediators, and primary schools/middle schools/high schools can benefit from visit-workshops upon request.

Initiation Workshops

The Foundation occasionally opens its wood, glass, and ceramic workshops to the public, enabling them to discover and be initiated to traditional or innovative craftsmanships under the guidance of local artisans.

The Boutique

The Foundation's boutique offers an extension of the visit by providing access to a selection of books and objects echoing the exhibitions and residencies of the year. It exclusively offers unique pieces and limited editions created by designers, artists, and collectives close to the Foundation. An exclusive and ethical selection, designed to showcase useful pieces, produced and distributed through short circuits, highlighting local and international creators.

Practical Information

Fondation d'entreprise Martell

16 avenue Paul Firino Martell
16100 Cognac, France

Exhibitions and Opening hours

June 8th - December 29th, 2024

Wednesday to Sunday 2pm - 7pm

Closed: Monday, Tuesday, and public holidays (July 14th and December 25th)

Information

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#fondationmartell #design #regenerativedesign

#transition #resources #territory #jbblunk #jbblunkestate

#blunkhouse

Instagram : [@fondationmartell](https://www.instagram.com/fondationmartell)

Linkedin : Fondation d'entreprise Martell

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