Jean Nouvel studied at the School of Fine Arts in Paris while alternating his studies with work in the office of Claude Parent. From his beginnings, Jean Nouvel sought solutions alien to the modern movement and was thus already considered postmodern in the 1970’s. During this period he met the scene decorator Jacques Marquet who is a very important colleague and good partner of conversation. All of his buildings have a light and etheric appearance, such as the Museo Reina Sofia in Madrid as well as Cartier Foundation in Paris. Nouvel had a great interest in using new techniques and materials, which were never more important than the actual purpose through.

Jean Nouvel is known for his capacity to dematerialize architecture. His works, regardless of their large size, appear us as light as ethereal. But Nouvel has also shown himself capable of introducing the image - wether on screen or printed on panels – as a constitutive element of architecture. Finally he knows how to build structures by basing himself on abstract ideas- such as virtuality. These elements along with the architect’s great capacity for innovation in terms of techniques and materials, are for many people what marks his personal style. But in fact this elements are at the service of each concrete piece of architecture. His technology or his intellectualism are tools Nouvel uses to build a reality.

ARAB WORLD INSTITUTE PARIS 1981-87
Nouvel won the 1981 competition with a project that proposed risk-taking solutions which over the course of the years have proved correct. The building acts as a buffer zone between the university of Jussieu, in large rationalist blocks, and the river Seine. The river facade follows the curve of the water way. With this rounded flow, the building loses the hardness of a rectangular block and is adapted to the visual trajectory obtainable from the Sully Bridge.

The opposite facade, on the other hand, is rectangular without apologies, Facing it is a large square, a visual space that opens out toward the ile-de-France and Notre Dame. Above this glass-clad front a metallic structure unfolds with moving geometric motifs that act as a “Brise-soleil”. They are mounted like diaphragms and can be graduated to the let light enter according to the weather conditions and the season of the year. This generates interiors with filtered light, very natural to Arabic Architecture and its climate –oriented strategies. This building catapulted Nouvel to fame and is one of the cultural reference points of Paris. Nouvel declared: “The facade is not a repetition of an Arabian arabesque, but a free interpretation, more than this technique I pointed out the game with light, with its geometry, in order to respect its principle and to fit the building in the Paris weather and light. Thus the main characteristic of an arabian arabesque is not only its function but its capability to suit the quantity of light, I used tecnology to exalt the mood and not the function.”

Lyons Opera House (1986-93)
The refurbishing project for the Lyons Opera House meant creating an entirely new structure and conserving only the nineteenth-century facade of the old building. The aims are clear: to give France’s second city a large operating complex and send the urban signal from the city center to underscore its identity. Thus the half cylinder is invented to fit onto the neoclassical facade, which not only does not visually annul the city grid into which the piece is slotted but actually confers on it a personality based on simplicity and plainness. The nineteenth-century vestibule still exercises the role of public entrance, and it also serves as a transitional element between the exterior and interior and as a way of distributing the space newly : off this run the doors, in the form of fast-moving escalators.
They take you to the rooms, to the elevators, right to the restaurant and terrace on the top floor. The building is also equipped with rehearsal spaces, like the ballet room, on the top floor, which includes a spectacular mirador.

The large arch of the Lyon Opera House has a specific functionality, both in term of use and in term of the visual: it is to make livable a space, an artistic movement, a social gathering, a city. It is to make passable a density – both phisical and mental.

Hotel Saint-James 1987-89
In the little town of Bouliac, on a hill surrounded by vienyards and with panoramas of Garonne and Bordeaux, is a small hotel that plays with the tergiversation of the idea of luxury. From afar, the hotel seems to be a group of four rusted roofs, not at all unlike the region’s old tobacco drying sheds. But on the front of the building one finds a certain kind of game being played with the material of the facades, a contrast between the fragile and well-planned transparent windows and the rusted metallic screens. This element serves as the whole building’s cladding system and can also be found in the windows, where it acts as a brise-soleil. From inside, the metal screening of the windows is not perceived agressive and actually acts to the contrary as a screen to filter the light in accord with the soft textures of the rooms’ finishes. All of the interiors are done with a great deal of austerity to bring about welcoming spaces. The 18 rooms receive panoramic distant views, like lookpoints. Their finishes are in polished concrete and confer an almost monastic feel that blends with comfort and refinement.

Cartier Foundation Paris 1991-94
The Cartier Foundation answers given needs, shared by Nouvel’s doubt, which create a reality that differs from a “simple”office or a “simple” exhibition room. The Boulevard Raspail Facade uses two large curtain walls that incorporate an old cedar tree planted by the poet Chateaubriand and that marks the entry to the building. The volume is set back off the street line, and the tall facade on the boulevard go right back along the building’s flanks. Its particular placement causes, from the street, its oblique visual perception so that nothing is seen behind the transparent wall. All of the glass panels act as miradors, reflecting the clouds and the city setting. It is through these that inside of the building is seen, the garden, the offices, and also the exhibition announcements. The piece dematerializes and thus becomes the active protagonist in a game of depths/surfaces that stun the gaze and the viewer’s perception. This contradictory mix generated by a weightless building also occurs in the offices and the exhibition salon, where the pilasters blend with the trucks of the trees in the garden.

Lafayette Galleries -Berlin 1991-96
As reference point in the city, this building is located at the crossroads of two of Berlin’s main streets.

The interior includes a series of large cones that litterally perforate its layers and bring natural lighting into every corner. Such apertures cause the gallery space to zoom out both below grade and on the succeeding upper levels, which contain the offices. The diaphanous ground floor acts as a distributor for the whole piece, and is a readable as a prolongation of street because it is open on both facades. The large central cone plays the role of mayor visual internal referent and mitigates the feeling of heaviness or monotony that some large warehouses tend to have. The leitmotif of the set is a mise-en-scène game based on the reflection and diffusion of light in its articulation of the whole subtle discourse of opposites and contrasts. The players are natural and artificial lighting, concealed and revealed.

Quai Branly Museum Paris - 2001
The museum on the rue Quai Branly is planned for the collection of ethnographic art in the national museums. Jean Nouvel attempted to meet or create a building on the premise of wrapping the collections' elements. The pieces in the museum are thus considered as sacred objects that report to us on human invention and gods and beliefs. The building must thus be medium where the works and their viewers meet. With this aim in mind, the project, seeks a profound emotional climate. The building is adapted to its setting, like the Seine beside the Quai Branly. It seeks continuity in the volumes and the green spaces with contiguous buildings and in the highest and internal rhythms of the facades. But in this quest for continuity there is also a mutation: the building is surrounded by a vegetation foreing to the Parisian garden.

It is thus transformed into a true forest that introduces us to the museum’s space and that acts as a transition between the city and the world that wishes to be respected, a comunion of all the cultures and people represented in the exhibition.

The Garden is designed by Gilles Clément, an horticultural engineer, writer, gardiner, and teacher by the National School of landscape in Versailles (ENPS). Besides his activity about designing parcs and gardens, public and private spaces, such as Parc Citoen in Paris, Parc Bercy in Paris, he develops theoretic studies on three main subjects: The garden in movement, The palnetarian garden, The third landscape.

He'd like to show the extreme diversity of what already exists on the earth, in particular the third landscape is a special landscape often forget by people, because is not considered important, such as the edge of street, some spot in the country etc. But the third landscape contains several species of trees and vegetables, which represent a future landscape such as the third State during French Revolution, which has a little importance, but asks for a presence in the society and was able to change the future of France.