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Sara de.GOUY

Designer, Architect and Artist

● **Sara de.Gouy draws and builds with color, light, and the people she works for. Architect, spatial designer, and artist, she seizes every opportunity to create a tailor-made, shared response that makes sense within the context in which it takes place. Inventiveness, attentiveness, and curiosity are among her fundamental ingredients, as are chromatic quality, a concern for precision, and the sustainability of her proposals.**

Trained in applied arts, architectural design, and visual arts, her perspective is multifaceted. Her complementary skills allow her to approach each proposal through the lens of spatial, visual, and functional context. Whether it's an object, installation, or piece of furniture, every design is first perceived and conceived according to its scale of intervention. A bench is an object within a landscaped site, a schoolyard holds dreams and adventures, a shelter deep in the forest changes hue depending on the time of day. Sara de.Gouy enjoys measuring and working with these scales to imagine their possible interconnections.

● Highly sensitive to color, her visual language plays with the geometry of spaces, combining and connecting shapes and shades, always conceived together. In her design, elementary forms and bold colors interact to generate a vocabulary, shaping spaces through contrast or nuance. Her creations draw us into color. Her vivid palette, inspired by concrete art and kinetic rhythms, employs intense yellows and tawny oranges to create colorful cadences.

● The participatory design approach has been fundamental to Sara de.Gouy's work from the very beginning, and it informs nearly all of the projects carried out by the studio, regardless of the audience or context. Above all, she involves future users to ensure that each facility is well designed and finely attuned to its intended uses. Together, the aim is to take the time to understand, to make things visible, and to reflect collectively on the commission and the best way to respond to it.

For sixteen years, Sara de.Gouy has developed a distinctive method that has grown stronger and more refined with each project. The modes and tools of dialogue are adapted to each project context.

● She has carried out numerous public space projects, including: the playground-sculpture *Archisculptures* in Saint-Denis, the schoolyard *Draw Me a Yard (Dessine-moi une cour)* in Sorbiers, *The Talking Bench (Le Banc à Palabres)* around a tree in Saint-Étienne, and *Pecten-Maximus*, an artistic shelter on the Way of Saint James made from scallop shells. In 2025, she is designing the

exhibition *There Once Was a City (Il était une ville)* for the Children's Gallery at the Centre Pompidou.

Born in 1983, Sara de Gouy lives and works in Lyon, France.

There Once Was a City

A workshop-exhibition by Sara de.Gouy, with and for children.

Children's Gallery – Centre Pompidou, Paris

Presented from February 13 to June 30, 2025

Ages 3 and older

Abstract :

Sara de.Gouy, an architect, spatial designer, and artist, presents "*There Once Was a City*", an immersive workshop-exhibition designed for and with children at the Children's Gallery of the Centre Pompidou. This project is rooted in a co-creation process, involving 7- to 8-year-old students in collective reflection on the ideal city. Through participatory workshops, urban walks, and artistic exploration, the children imagined a city that is more joyful, poetic, and sustainable.

The exhibition, designed as a life-sized model, invites visitors to interact with playful and colorful installations : interactive pedestrian crossings, question trees, extraordinary gardens, and starry cabins. Sara de.Gouy explores the connections between architecture, design, and civic participation, placing the child at the heart of the creative process. "*There Once Was a City*" questions the role of children in urban spaces and offers a collective, creative vision of the city of tomorrow.

Keywords :

Participatory design, Child-centered architecture, Co-creation ,Art and urbanspace, Play-basedlearning, Interactive installations, Urban sustainability, Immersive exhibition



There Once was a city. Centre Pompidou Paris, Sara de.Gouy

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Sara de.Gouy, architect, spatial designer and artist, was invited by the Centre Pompidou to create a workshop-exhibition dedicated to children. She chose to design the exhibition through a co-creation process with children, in line with her working approach that places users at the heart of the creative process.

Indeed, Sara de.Gouy integrates an original participatory approach with the public into her design work: the artist developed her project in dialogue with students from two Year 2 classes (aged 7–8) from a Parisian primary school, who took part in a series of six workshop days in spring 2024.

In this laboratory for the future workshop-exhibition, the students observed their environment and reimagined objects and urban spaces to reflect — together with the artist — on the city of their dreams. It began with a visit to the Centre Pompidou, where the students discovered the Children's Gallery designed by Hélène Bertin, allowing them to explore the future exhibition space. This was followed by a museum visit, featuring a selection of artworks chosen by the artist, such as immersive installations and pieces from the architecture collection displayed throughout the museum's upper floors.

After an introduction to the professions of designer and architect, Sara de.Gouy organized a two-hour urban walk through the school's neighborhood. This walk enabled the collection of questions, ideas, and themes for reflection around the concept of a child's perspective on the city. From this exploration, Sara de.Gouy developed thematic workshops in which the children worked on concepts like the bus shelter, pedestrian crossing, public square, ideal cabin, city in color, orchard, wind turbines, water collectors, and more.

The children engaged in model making, collage, drawing, and even invented game rules...



There Once was a city. Workshop with children about pedestrian crossing
 ©Sara de.Gouy

There Once Was a City, a workshop-exhibition, is inspired by everything that was created and imagined during the workshops. Sara de.Gouy invites visitors to imagine and experience a city that is more joyful, more poetic, more sustainable — and adapted to children. Designed as a large-scale model, the installation plays with scale — both that of the city and that of its young visitors. Here, the apple tree is as tall as the buildings, and giant flowers surround the cabin.

When you arrive, a pedestrian crossing with new rules makes walking across the road more fun, before you are then invited to transform the buildings' façades using coloured shapes. An apple tree, an evocation of the dream of having orchards in the city, has questions on the theme of nature in the urban space written on its fruit. Families can pick them up and share them on a bench

designed for all sizes and postures, while sound pipes let you listen to the thoughts of the pupils who participated in the project.

Further along the route, there is a garden with astonishing plants, representing the city as a place of growth where you can create your own imaginary flowers and makeshift structures. In the centre of the garden, a large hut with a starry sky invites you to continue your dreaming for a while in peace and quiet and to be enveloped by the scents of nature.

In this eco-friendly city, children climb the city's rooftops to operate wind turbines and play with water lilies, insects and fish in a mirror pool fed by raindrops. The city of the future exists in harmony with living things and natural elements, such as the sun, rain and wind.

The exhibition booklet is a drawing to be completed, allowing children to imagine the city of their dreams. Displayed on a wall, it offers a glimpse into the rich imagination of children and a better understanding of their aspirations for an ideal city. Thus, in the exhibition, the child becomes an active participant in the installations and in their city. *Once Upon a City* encourages young visitors to reinvent the city and their environment in turn.



General View of the Exhibition / The Extraordinary Garden
 ©Sara de.Gouy ©Laura Samoilovich

The exhibition was designed to be itinerant, travelling to various partner museums of the Centre Pompidou, in France and abroad. The next exhibition will take place at MOCO Panacée, Contemporary Art Center of the City of Montpellier, starting on October 22, 2025.

Design : Sara de.Gouy

Product managers: Alice Maxia, Laura Samoilovitch

Centre Pompidou ParisFor more informations :

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