



Vue de l'exposition «Les Statues!»  
photo Archives Kamel Mennour  
Courtesy of the artist and Kamel Mennour



Ribera Ténèbres et Lumière, Petit Palais Paris 2024  
photo Gautier Deblonde



# SPACE BREATHES, REMEMBERS, *and* PROVOKES

Imagine a theatre stage, a museum gallery, or an art installation. In each of these worlds, there is someone who shapes the invisible structure of experience — orchestrating light, proportion, rhythm, colour, and even silence. That unseen hand belongs to the scenographer.

A scenographer is, in essence, a storyteller who works through space — treating it as a silent character, alive within the artwork or the narrative it holds. It's a practice defined not by function, but by dramaturgy: by emotion, tension, and the choreography of perception.

Among today's leading figures in this discipline, Cécile Degos stands out for her ability to give form to meaning. In this conversation, she reflects on the art of shaping space — and the projects that continue to expand her scenographic language.





*The title of “scenographer” can mean very different things depending on the context. From theatre stages to museum installations, scenography spans multiple domains. How do you personally define your practice today?*

For me, scenography is about creating meaning through space. Whether in a museum or a gallery, my work involves building a kind of narrative architecture — a structure that guides, questions, and deepens the viewer's perception of art. My practice sits at the intersection of design, dramaturgy, and visual culture. It's never about decoration, but about developing a scenographic language that resonates with the artworks and their context.

*You often serve as a crucial link between the curator's vision and the physical manifestation of a show. How do you navigate that role — translating curatorial narratives into spatial experiences while also maintaining your own creative signature?*

It's a kind of dance — delicate and exciting. I listen a lot: to the artworks, to the curators, to the spirit of the project. My role isn't to impose a style, but to reveal tensions, rhythms, and dialogues through space. I work through sketches, models, references, and conversations — translating abstract ideas into concrete proposals. My signature probably lies in this process: precise, structured, sometimes bold, but always in service of meaning and of the artworks themselves.

*Your approach is praised for its boldness and precision, as well as for creating multi-layered, immersive exhibitions. What are some of the first questions or instincts that guide your thinking when you approach a new exhibition space?*

I always start with the artworks: what do they need to express themselves, to breathe, to interact, or to provoke the viewer? Then I think about the dramaturgy of the space: where does the eye rest? How does the body move through it? I pay close attention to thresholds, rhythms, sightlines, and perspectives. I like working with contrasts — between opacity and transparency, weight and lightness, monumentality and intimacy.







## I NEVER SEE CONTEXT AS A CONSTRAINT, BUT AS A RICHNESS

*You've worked with major institutions like the Bourse de Commerce, the Royal Academy, and the Musée d'Orsay. How do you balance historical context with a contemporary language?*

I see context not as a constraint but as a source of richness. History and tradition become materials to activate. My approach is always site-specific — echoing an architectural gesture, shifting a classical axis, or revealing a forgotten corner — creating dialogue rather than rupture between eras and sensibilities.

*You recently completed two remarkable projects — the Musée d'Orsay recreation in China and the George Condo exhibition at the Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris during Art Basel. What connected these very different shows in terms of your design thinking?*

Both explored the tension between monumentality and intimacy. In China, the challenge was to present masterpieces from the Musée d'Orsay through a new spatial language, giving Chinese audiences an immersive sense of the museum — not by replication, but by evocation. For George Condo, the emotional intensity of his work required a scenography that played with echoes, perspectives, and above all, rhythm — tracing the evolution of a living artist's practice.

*Your work with galleries like Gagosian, Perrotin, and Kamel Mennour follows a different rhythm than institutional shows. How does your process change when designing for commercial gallery spaces versus public museums?*

Gallery projects are often faster. The dialogue with the gallery or the artist is more direct, more immediate, which sometimes allows me to explore more radical gestures. Institutional projects, by contrast, are more collaborative and unfold more slowly. Each project activates a different part of my practice, and I enjoy oscillating between the two.

*In your designs, the space often becomes an active character in the narrative. How do you view the emotional or psychological role of space in shaping how we experience art?*

Space is never neutral. It breathes, it remembers, it provokes. A proportion, a color, a passageway, a perspective — all of these affect our senses, our gaze, and our perception of time. I think of space as a dramaturgical actor: it can create suspense, silence, intimacy, or confrontation. My aim is to orchestrate attention without ever confining interpretation.

## I OFTEN WORK IN SEQUENCES —WITH ECHOES AND RUPTURES

*You often incorporate symbolic architectural gestures into your scenography — walls, thresholds, sightlines. Do you consider scenography as a form of storytelling through spatial dramaturgy?*

Absolutely. Scenography, for me, is a narrative structure. I often work in sequences — with echoes and ruptures. A threshold can mark a shift in tone; a wall can conceal or reveal; a bench can invite a pause; a curve can soften the gaze. Every architectural gesture carries symbolic meaning.

*If you had complete creative freedom and unlimited resources, what kind of exhibition would you love to create next — and where would it be shown?*

I would love to create an in situ exhibition in a place outside the traditional circuits — an abandoned industrial building, a former observatory, or a site charged with history. A space full of memory, where scenography could engage in dialogue with the layers of time. It would be an immersive experience blending contemporary art, architecture, sound, and light. The city or country doesn't matter much — what's essential is the experience and the space that's created. It could be anywhere in the world. My work has no borders; it's a universal language.



Picasso – The Code of Painting,  
PoMo, Trondheim, 2025;  
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