

Floor at Le Magasin Électrique, LUMA Arles, France.  
© Adrian Dewerd

## Official Opening of Le Magasin Électrique at LUMA Arles

Atelier LUMA is a program of LUMA Arles, based in the Parc des Ateliers in Arles and deeply connected to its geographic and cultural environment: the Camargue region, the Alpilles mountains and the Crau plains. While Atelier LUMA and its first research projects were established in the Parc des Ateliers in 2016, they are the product of planning and reflection that began in 2008. The research carried out by Atelier LUMA aims to identify the issues impacting the bioregion and to address appropriate solutions, particularly through valorizing local know-how and undervalued or wasted resources. The methods developed at Atelier LUMA are shared far beyond their originating bioregion, helping to guide local processes of transition across the globe. Atelier LUMA is part of a global ecosystem formed by LUMA Arles, which offers artists, designers and researchers the opportunity to gain new perspectives on creation, production and experimentation, always with the goal of sharing and transmission.

# A T E L I E R L U M A

“Importantly, Atelier LUMA functions not solely as a catalyst for sustainable infrastructure, but as a producer of knowledge. Sharing and exchanging findings with networks around the globe and developing models for doing so outside of conventional channels constitute the heart of Atelier LUMA’s work (...) While remaining rooted in Arles and the Camargue, we have begun applying Atelier LUMA’s methodology to territories in other regions and countries. As we enter a new chapter, our experience of this rich and varied territory will inform the way we weave ties between the local environment, culture, and heritage elsewhere in the world and thus impact its future.”

**Maja Hoffmann,**  
Founder and president of LUMA Foundation  
and LUMA Arles

“We began Atelier LUMA by mapping the territory of Arles and the Camargue, identifying layers of resources and imagining ways they could be reassembled or reconfigured to contribute to its adaptation to changing environmental and social conditions. This initial anchoring in a specific environmental and social space has come to shape our practices into bioregional ones, no matter where we are working.”

**Jan Boelen,**  
Artistic Director of Atelier LUMA



I

I.  
Final rendering of Le Magasin Électrique, LUMA Arles, France.  
©Adrian Deweerdt



II

## Inaugural Program

From May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Le Magasin Électrique, a historic building in the Parc des Ateliers that has been renovated by Atelier LUMA in collaboration with BC architects & studies and Assemble, and which is the outcome of numerous experiments, will open its doors to the public and professionals alike through visits, conferences, projections and workshops. The building renovation process provided the opportunity to implement Lot 8, a long-term research project for developing a bioregional architecture. This new space will be unveiled over the course of an inaugural weekend, and will continue to be animated by special events and regular programming. Operating as a true large-scale prototype, the project brought together a wide array of local partners and served as the occasion for collective workshops and training sessions on the materials and techniques developed. Le Magasin Électrique is a “space of possibilities, a canvas,” tells Jan Boelen, Artistic Director of Atelier LUMA: it is a building that is never finished, instead perpetually transforming through new discoveries, encounters, and stories.

On the occasion of this inauguration, the second edition of the Environmental History symposium will be held within Le Magasin Électrique on May 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>. Environmental History offers a rich framework for understanding the transformation of societies as embedded in the environment in which they formed and developed. Through the symposium, research projects and encounters will crystallize and build bridges between the many programs developed at LUMA Arles.

May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023 will mark a major next step with the inauguration of this large-scale laboratory, which brings together a resource center, production hub, multiple research labs and dedicated program spaces for welcoming a diverse public.

### the sustainable institution

The inauguration program of Le Magasin Électrique is organized as part of *The Sustainable Institution* program with partners E-WERK Luckenwalde (Germany) and Rupert (Lithuania).

*The Sustainable Institution is co-funded by the European Union and Teltow Fläming. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or Teltow Fläming. Neither the European Union nor Teltow Fläming can be held responsible for them.*

II. Bloc B, Agora, with Rammed Earth walls and reclaimed roof tiles terrazzo floor, Le Magasin Électrique, LUMA Arles, France.  
© Joseph Halligan



# Le Magasin Électrique, a collaborative prototype

Starting in 2023, Atelier LUMA has transitioned its activities to Le Magasin Électrique within the Parc des Ateliers. This newly-renovated, historic industrial building, inaugurated in spring 2023, was the three-year site of a large-scale, experimental building project, designed to serve as a pilot program in the field of renovation.

Le Magasin Électrique is built and equipped with the results of Atelier LUMA's research, in collaboration with BC architects & studies and Assemble, from the coating of the façade to the socket covers. Structural elements such as walls and partitions were produced from waste earth and minerals, and agricultural coproducts. The acoustics and the finishing of the interiors were done with panels of sunflower fibers, rice straw, and soil from the bioregion. The terrazzo floor, bathroom tiles, stains, door handles, and light fixtures are the result of years of research into algae, salt, bioplastics, earth, and enamels in collaboration with local partners.

Situated in the Parc des Ateliers, the building was conceived as a pilot project for an architectural program structured around the valorization of traditional know-how, collective experimentation in the work-site, the development of biomaterials anchored in the Arles bioregion and the establishment of a network for local and international expertise, in order to share acquired knowledge.

Le Magasin Électrique, designed by and for Atelier LUMA, is the teams' workplace. A research and prototyping space that consists of a biolab, wood, ceramics, textile and DTP workshops, office spaces, a dye house, a materials testing lab, and a functional plant garden. The Agora, a large central space in the building, hosts temporary exhibitions and events open to the public.

Le Magasin Électrique is becoming the new center of activity for Atelier LUMA. On the occasion of its inauguration, visitors are invited to discover its many activities from within, by exploring the 2000 m<sup>2</sup> of research laboratories, production workshops and resource center, and through an exhibition detailing the restoration of the building.



III

“It’s really about learning from each other (...). If you walk through the buildings and spaces and you look around, you see so many stories.”

**Laurens Bekemans,**  
Architect and co-founder of BC architects & studies

“The building would become a testing ground, a space to experiment (...). The building is also a prototype or a kind of constant construction.”

**Joe Halligan,**  
Co-founder of the architecture and art collective Assemble

“Natural materials don’t come in industrialized standardized forms...”

**James Binning,**  
Architect, Assemble

III.  
South facade of Le Magasin Électrique during construction,  
March 2022, LUMA Arles, France. ©Adrian Deweerdt



**BC is BC architects & studios & materials.** BC stands for Brussels Cooperation and points to how BC grew -embedded within place and people. We operate through 3 legal entities registered in Belgium: BC architects bv (architecture practice), BC studies vzw (non-profit education laboratory), BC materials cv (material production cooperative).

“BC is a hybrid practice, designing and undertaking “acts of building” towards systemic change in the construction sector. We strive for bioregional, low-tech, circular, beautiful and inclusive design. We work with our minds and our hands, undertaking activities such as community organisation, material production, contracting, teaching, prototyping. We aim to impact positively on people’s ideas and planet. We act on behalf of the generations after us.”

[www.bc-asm.org](http://www.bc-asm.org)

IV. Production line of compressed earth blocks made from locally sourced materials, set up as an open workshop, for the construction of the public project of Fort V in Edegheem, Belgium. © Thomas Noceto

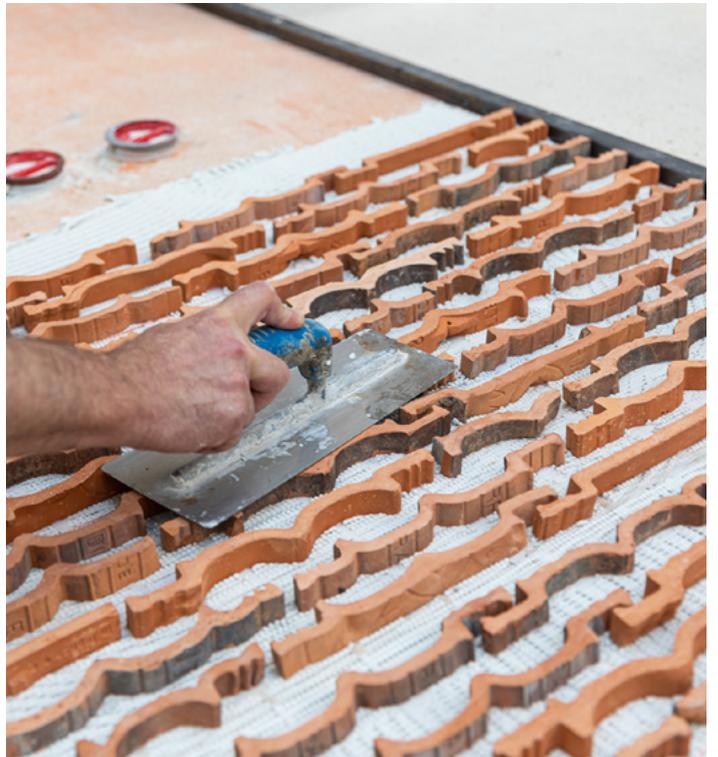
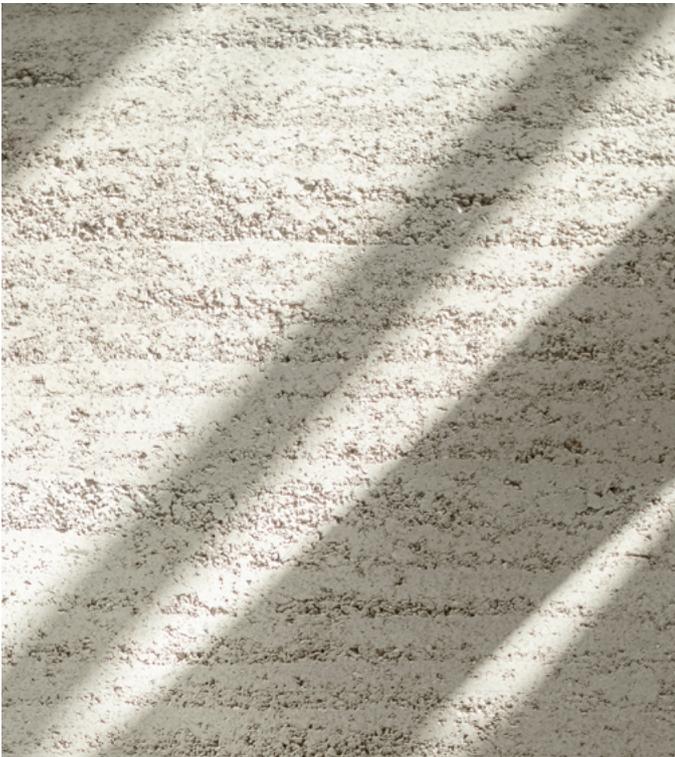
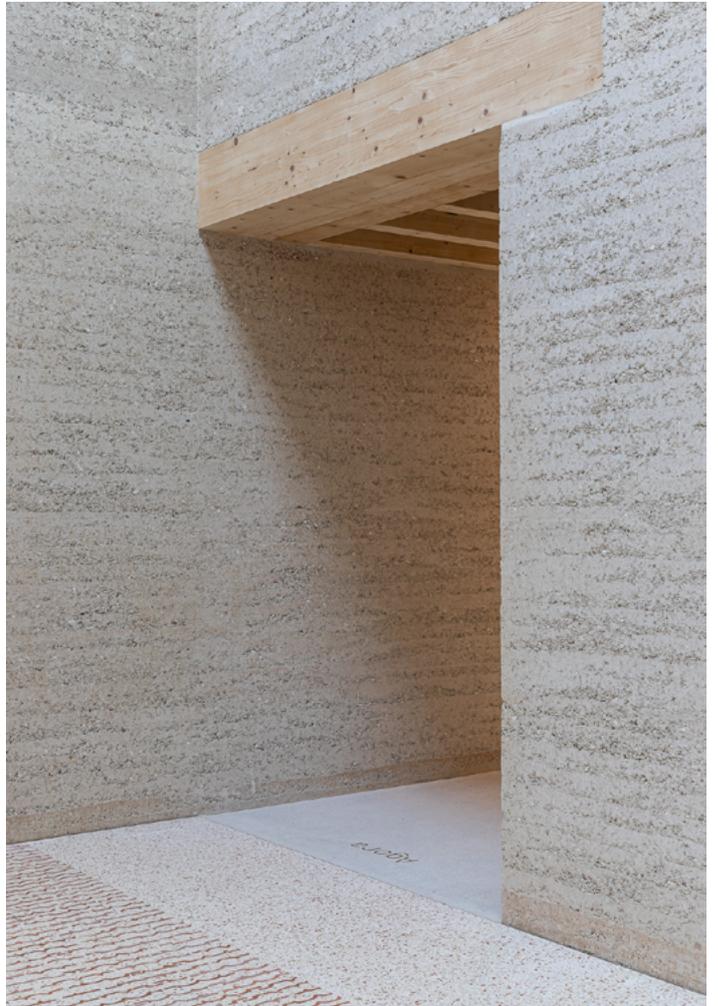
V. Assemble. © Assemble



**Assemble** is a London based multi-disciplinary collective working across architecture, design and art. Founded in 2010 to undertake a single self-built project, Assemble has since delivered a diverse and award-winning body of work, whilst retaining a democratic and co-operative working method that enables built, social and research-based work at a variety of scales, both making things and making things happen.

Assemble has worked on an array of complex projects from a small kiosk clad in hand made ceramic tiles outside Seven Sisters underground station in London and a Winter Garden delivered in collaboration with the local Community Land Trust in Granby, Liverpool to a £3.2 million art gallery within a Grade II listed former bath house for Goldsmiths, University of London. Linking our projects is an interest in careful readings of the context and working with people in ways that recognise their labour and participation in the built outcome.

Assemble was the recipient of the Turner Prize (2015), Ruth and Ralph Erksine Award (2022) and in 2023 was elected as Academicians of the Royal Academy in London. [www.assemblestudio.co.uk](http://www.assemblestudio.co.uk)



VI.  
Model of Le Magasin Électrique, LUMA Arles, France.  
© Joana Luz  
VII, VIII.  
Final rendering of Le Magasin Électrique, LUMA  
© Adrian Deweerdt

IX.  
Building site of Le Magasin Électrique, LUMA Arles, France.  
© Adrian Deweerdt

# Atelier LUMA: Genesis and development over the years

## ● 2016

Atelier LUMA's first research projects began in 2016, taking as the foundation for all research both a cartographic approach to the territory and a thorough investigation into the region's know-how and undervalued resources.

X



XI

X, XI.  
Purple Room, at La Formation, LUMA Arles, France.  
© Olivier Querette / Ektadoc / Caméléon

XII.  
Purple Room, at La Formation, LUMA Arles, France.  
© Victor Picon



XII



XIV

XIII.  
Map on land use in the Camargue, at La Mécanique Générale,  
LUMA Arles, France. © Victor&Simon / Victor Picon

XIV.  
Antique Roman dishes 3D printed in bioplastic loaded with algae.  
© Victor&Simon / Victor Picon

## 2017

Research projects intensified in February 2017 with a program involving students from the Design Academy Eindhoven (DAE), beginning initial research into natural color deposits.

This veritable color laboratory gathered pigments and dyes from local plants, algae and minerals to create paints, stains, inks, varnishes and coatings. The center of the Atelier's activity was situated then in La Formation building, in the Parc des Ateliers, and later moved to La Mécanique Générale, where it has acquired increasingly technical equipment and capabilities.

In May 2017, the Atelier's projects were presented to the public for the first time at the inaugural edition of LUMA Days, a collaborative forum bringing together local and international experts at the nexus of art, design, technology, social engagement and ecology.

Over the course of a week of exchange, La Mécanique Générale was transformed into a vast site for collaborative creation, culminating in a presentation of the entire production of Atelier LUMA.

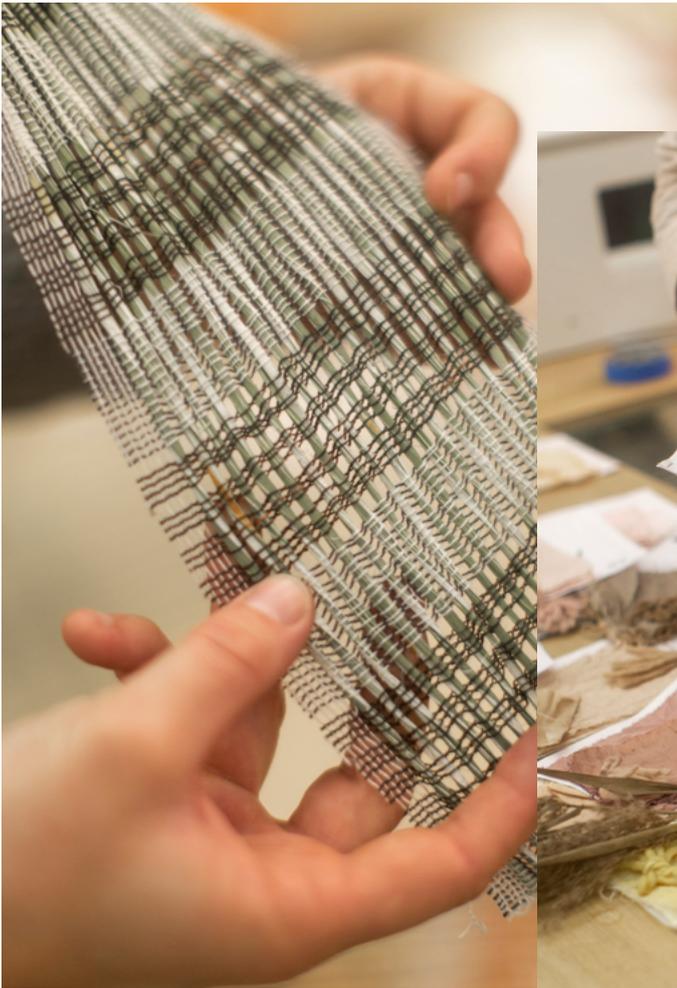
The year 2017 also marked the beginning of research around salt. In collaboration with local partners, and drawing on the ancestral know-how of the Giraud's declining salt makers, Atelier LUMA explored various salt transformation techniques and applied them to design prototypes. At the same time, the first collaborations around sunflower production worked to develop biomaterials from the by-products of sunflower seed cultivation and oil production, aiming to valorize each part of the plant.



## 2018

In 2018, Atelier LUMA launched a series of research projects around textiles that gave way to a textile laboratory, where projects aimed to identify local resources in connection with economic, socio-historic and environmental issues. The team thus developed projects in conjunction with the local Arles Merino wool industry, using invasive agave plants from the Calanques National Park in Marseille and micro-algae from the Camargue. This marked the start of a research program focused on the earth, and led to a Mediterranean design network created to connect wetland ecosystem areas throughout the Mediterranean via design — from the Camargue to Sardinia, Turkey and Egypt.

In the same year, Atelier LUMA once again presented its research work to the public through participation in the Salone del Mobile in Milan, continuing the strong desire to make localized research reverberate and connect on a global scale.



XVI



XVII

XV, XVI, XVII.  
Tests of vegetable dyeing on textile.  
© Victor&Simon / Joana Luz



## • 2019

The year 2019 saw Atelier LUMA enter into a dynamic of increased collaboration and sharing, first with the start of the Studio Martino Gamper residency, and then with the launch of a collaboration with BC architects & studies and Assemble on Le Magasin Électrique renovation project, Lot 8. These residencies allowed the teams to acquire a deeper understanding of the territory and to develop their approaches, while not forgetting, of course, sharing and conviviality, the key words behind these stays. The residencies notably resulted in the renovation of the Parc des Ateliers' Réfectoire with Martino Gamper, making extensive use of local resources: chairs made with bioplastics, banquettes upholstered in Arles Merino wool, windows screens made from paper yarn and dyed with local plants, and biolaminate panels made from mussel shells.

This also marked the start of the Lot 8 project, co-designed with BC architects & studies and Assemble, to renovate Le Magasin Électrique, a building for uncertainties. The approach hinged upon radical choices, favoring bioregional materials, collaborating with local craftspeople, and constituting the building as a living organism, designed to continually evolve along with research and development of materials. Parallely, Atelier LUMA committed to transmitting its methods for the first time with the publication of *Design as a Tool for Transition*, which was presented alongside developed materials at numerous exhibitions and fairs in Milan, London, Istanbul, Basel and elsewhere.



- XVIII.  
Bioplastic textile monofilaments loaded with microalgae. © Victor&Simon / Joana Luz
- XIX.  
Formulation tests of screen printing ink colored with microalgae. © Victor&Simon / Victor Picon
- XX.  
Tests of vegetable dyeing on textile. © Victor&Simon / Joana Luz

XIX

XX



XXII

XXI.  
Experimentation of algae cultivation in Atelier LUMA.  
© Adrian Deweerdt

XXII.  
Atelier LUMA at the World Economic Forum in Davos, 2020.  
© Victor&Simon / Victor Picon

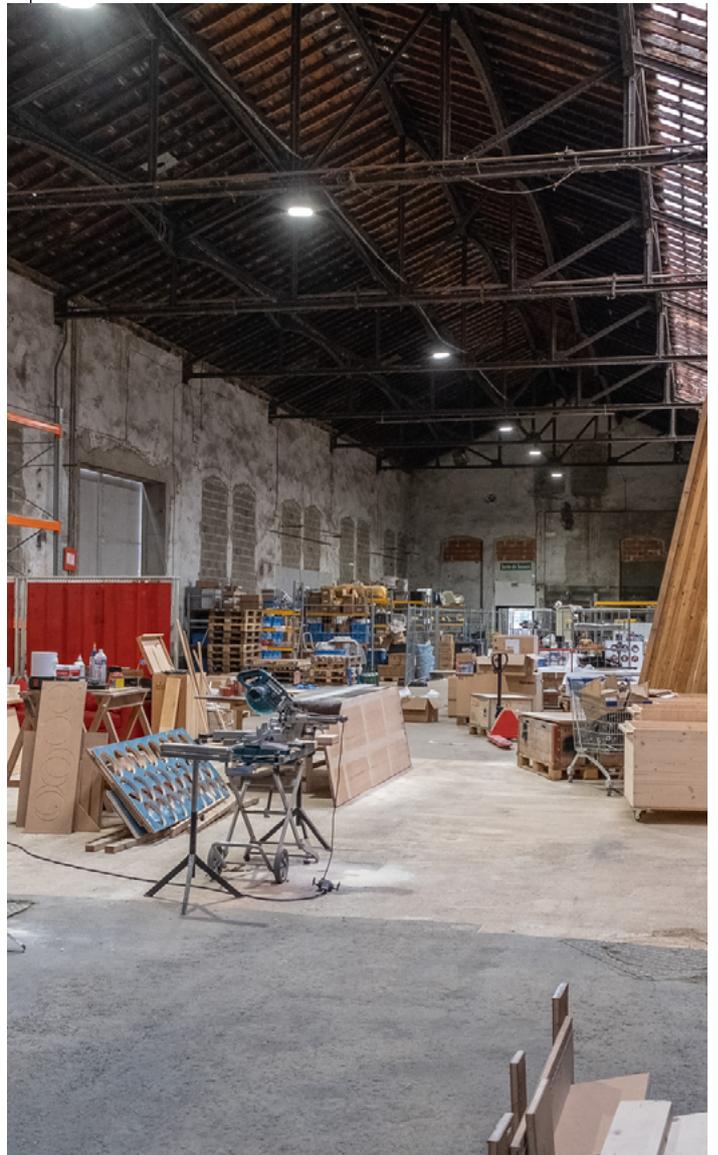
XXIII.  
Building site of Le Magasin Électrique, 2021-2022,  
LUMA Arles, France. © Adrian Deweerdt

## 2020

In January 2020, Atelier LUMA participated in the World Economic Forum in Davos, using the occasion to present the Algae Platform, a network of experts studying potential architecture and design applications for algae.

In December 2020, Atelier LUMA hosted its first international summit on algae, piloted from Arles and marked by the locality.

The Algae Summit, and the publication of the pedagogical Algae Review, represented the culmination of four years of research in the field and opened up new perspectives for the future.



XXIII



XXV

XXIV.  
Wall of Salt project by Atelier LUMA, Salins de Giraud, France.  
© Adrian Deweerdt

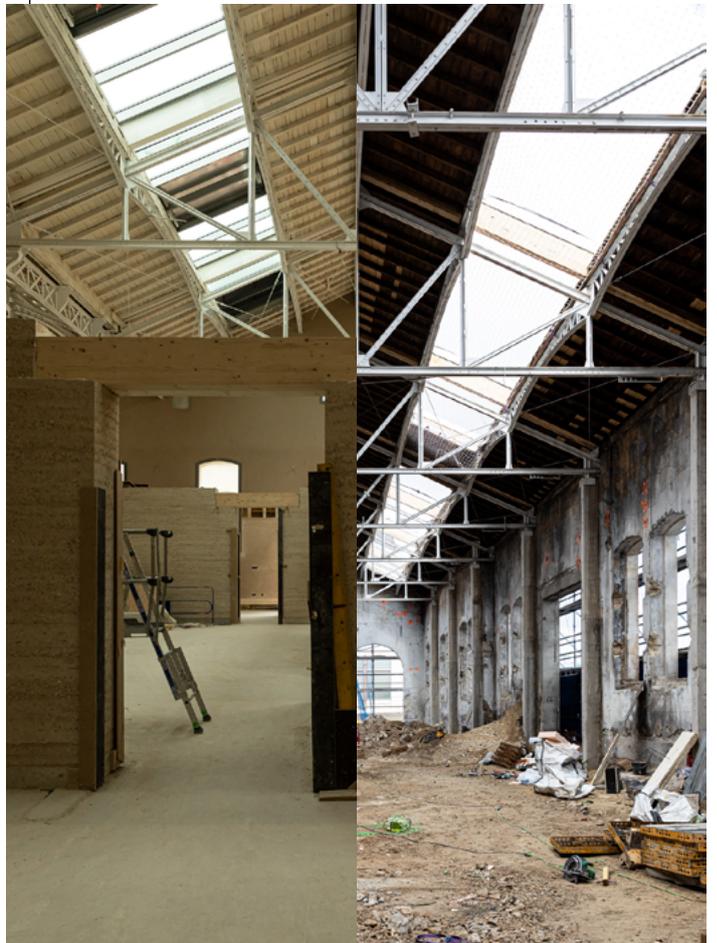
XXV.  
Bioplastic tiles loaded with algae and dyeing plants.  
© Adrian Deweerdt

XXVI.  
Building site of Le Magasin Électrique, 2021-2022,  
LUMA Arles, France. © Adrian Deweerdt

## • 2021 - 2022

The year 2021 was marked by the opening of The Tower to the public, and was a year punctuated by many high points, including exhibitions, conferences, workshops, projections, concerts and artist residencies. It also meant the realization of years of research at Atelier LUMA, with many materials being permanently implanted in The Tower. The public can discover the Arles Merino wool tapestry and sunflower walls in the Drum Café, and bioplastic wall panels, textile-based furniture and walls built from salt tiles. Atelier LUMA also invited visitors into its work space in La Mécanique Générale with tours, presentations of materials and other pedagogical activities offered to the public.

Research and workshops continued, focusing on traditional construction methods and raw earth, fibers and rammed earth materials, as the renovation of Le Magasin Électrique intensified in collaboration with BC architects & studios, Assemble and a large panel of local and international building experts. Le Magasin Électrique was awarded the Bâtiments Durables Méditerranées design-phase gold label thanks to its economically, socially and materially regenerative approach.



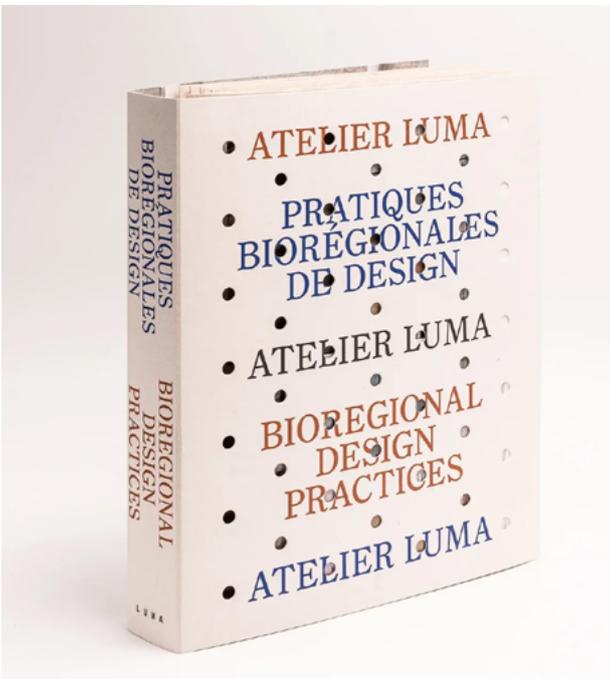
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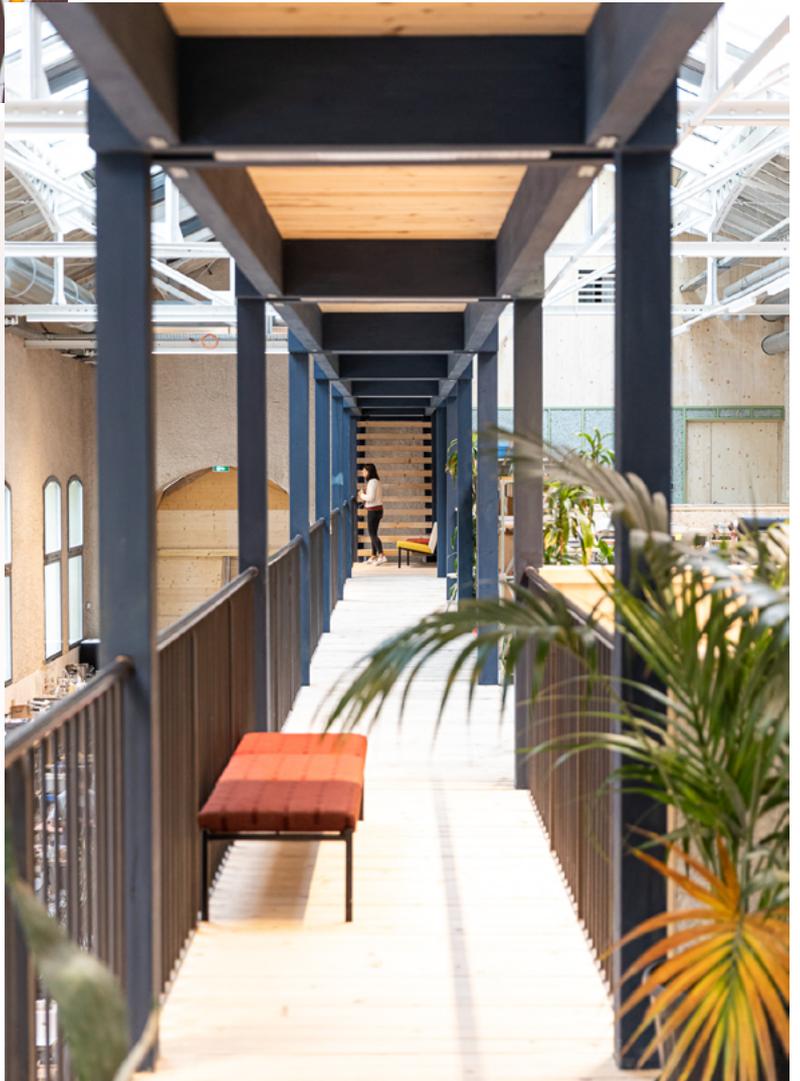
## • 2023

In 2023, Atelier LUMA has been rolling out and diving into its new center of activity, Le Magasin Électrique, and in April participated in the Salone del Mobile de Milan, continuing to share a vision of bio-regional design through the publication of a new book — *Bioregional Design Practices* by Atelier LUMA — an exhibition and a series of conferences, all based upon the four pillars of Atelier LUMA: investigation, design, implementation and transmission.

May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023, will mark a new stage in the development of Atelier LUMA with the inauguration of Le Magasin Électrique, accompanied by a program of conferences, workshops and encounters that will animate the space throughout the year. These events will be an opportunity to bring together professionals, but also diverse audiences of all types, energizing Le Magasin Électrique with special events open to all while also engaging more globally through activations of the different spaces of LUMA Arles.



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XXVII.

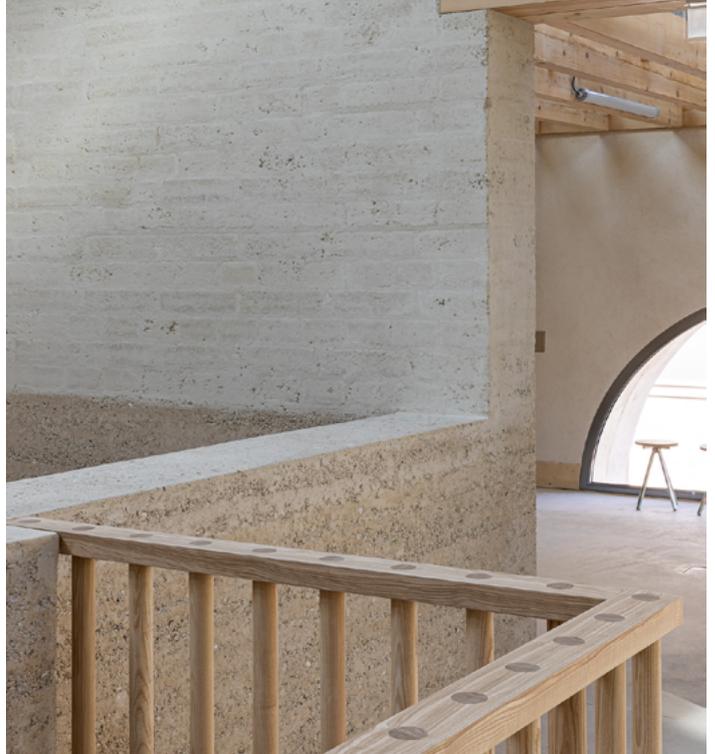
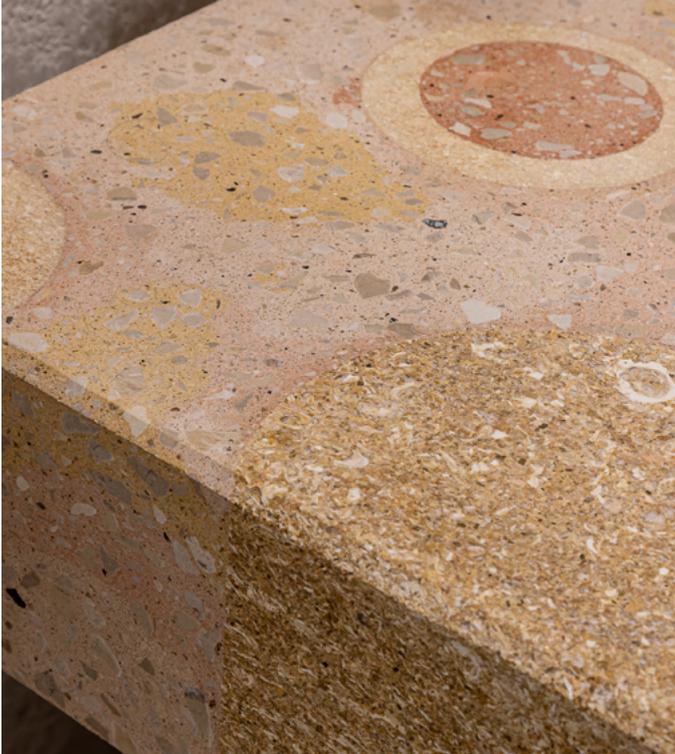
Algae windowpanes Recycled bioplastic colored with microalgae and mineral powders. Handmade.  
© Victor&Simon / Joana Luz

XXVIII.

Atelier LUMA Bioregional Design Practices  
© Adrian Deweerdt

XXIX.

Final rendering of Le Magasin Électrique,  
LUMA Arles, France. © Adrian Deweerdt



XXXI

XXXIII

XXX.  
 Final rendering of Le Magasin Électrique,  
 LUMA Arles, France. © Joana Luz  
 XXXI, XXXIII.  
 Final rendering of Le Magasin Électrique,  
 LUMA Arles, France. © Adrian Deweerdt

XXXII.  
 Bloc C, Mezzanine, with Indigo and Algae Blue Stain, May 2023,  
 Le Magasin Électrique, LUMA Arles, France.  
 © Joseph Halligan



XXXIV

XXXIV.

Stools of bioplastics that incorporate recycled bioplastics, microalgae, plant-based additives, and plant-based dyes. Le Magasin Électrique, LUMA Arles, France. © Joana Luz

More about Atelier LUMA :  
[LUMA Live](#)  
[Atelier LUMA's website](#)

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