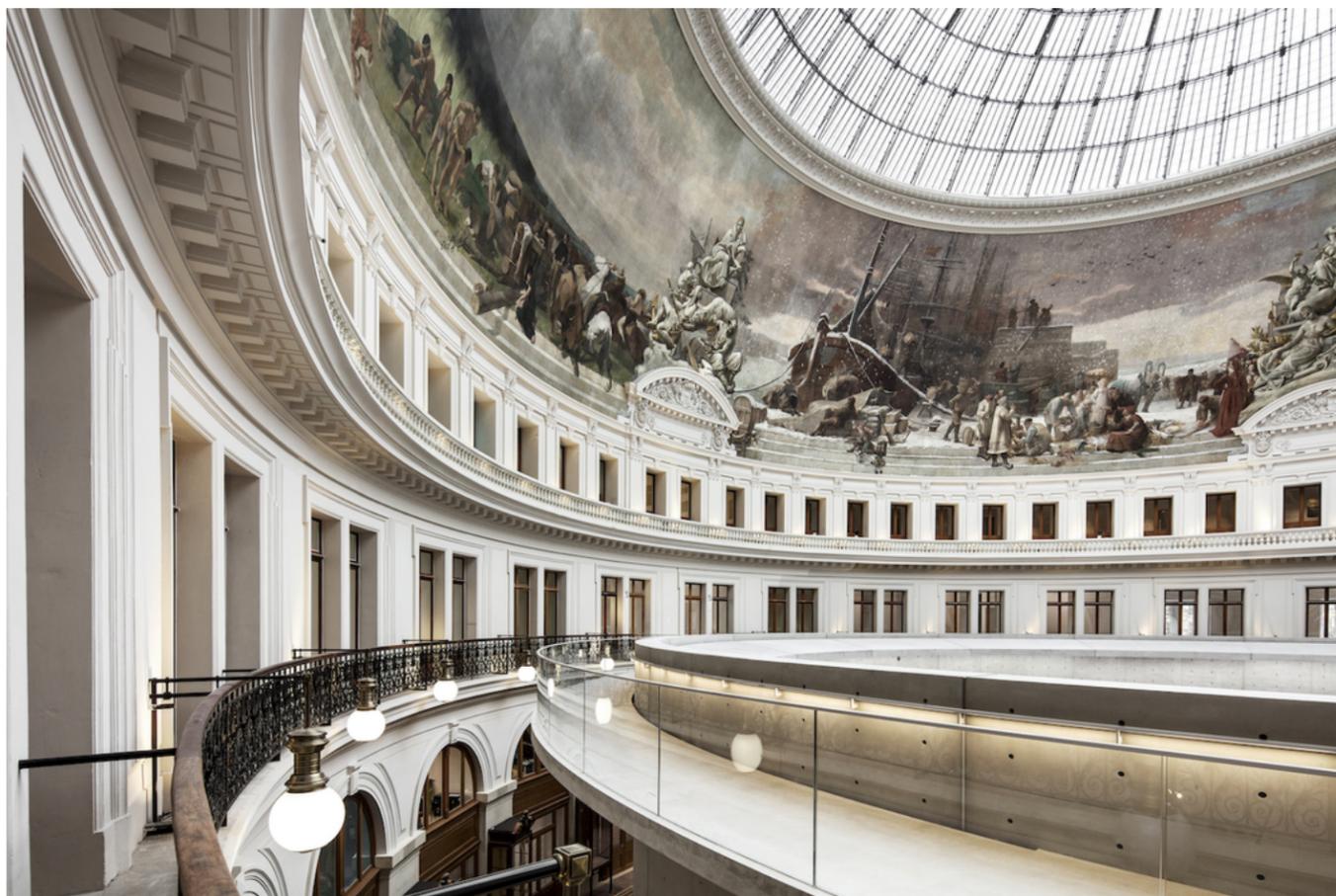


SLANT

TOUR DE BOURSE

May 20, 2021 • Mara Hoberman on Francois Pinault's Bourse de Commerce



Interior of the Bourse de Commerce – Pinault Collection. © Tadao Ando Architect & Associates, Niney et Marca Architectes, Agence Pierre-Antoine Gatier. Photo: Patrick Tourneboeuf.

MAY 19 WAS A HISTORIC DAY IN FRANCE. After six months of Covid-19 lockdown, restaurants, cinemas, theaters, and museums finally reopened to the public. In Paris, a hub for fine dining and fine art, this major step toward normalcy was feted like a national holiday as institutions including the Louvre, Musée d'Orsay, Centre Pompidou, and Musée d'Art Moderne welcomed back visitors. Adding to the excitement, the city will gain a brand-new shrine to contemporary art on May 22: François Pinault's collection at the Bourse de Commerce.

The Bourse seems uniquely well suited to house works acquired by the French billionaire businessman. The oldest part of the building, the Medici Column on the north side, was commissioned by Queen Catherine de Medici in the sixteenth century and was attached to her private residence. The massive circular structure at its center was built in the eighteenth century as a grain market and, a century later, became a general stock exchange. That Pinault's collection has finally landed in Paris at a site with such overt ties to royalty and capitalism speaks volumes about how private wealth is rebuilding and rebranding the French cultural scene.

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Like most big events planned for 2020, the unveiling of the Bourse was rescheduled several times

due to the pandemic, but these delays seem relatively minor considering that Pinault—who founded Kering, a holding company for luxury brands including Gucci and Saint Laurent, and is the owner of Christie’s—has been trying to open a museum in the French capital since the mid-aughts. In 2005, citing insurmountable bureaucratic hurdles, Pinault scrapped plans for a Tadao Ando-designed venue on l’île Seguin, a small island in the Seine just west of Paris. The press speculated that certain French politicians believed museums should be run by the state, not by private citizens. Rebuffed, Pinault instead graced Venice with his collection, there dispersed across two Ando-renovated palazzos—Palazzo Grassi and Punta della Dogana, opened in 2006 and 2009 respectively. Still, Paris remained a priority for the collector, and eventually French politicians warmed to the idea of privately funded museums, with Bernard Arnault’s Fondation Louis Vuitton paving the way in 2014. Two years later, mayor Anne Hidalgo offered Pinault a fifty-year lease on the Bourse de Commerce, a landmarked circular building in the heart of the right bank.



Exterior of the Bourse de Commerce – Pinault Collection. © Tadao Ando Architect & Associates, Niney et Marca Architectes, Agence Pierre-Antoine Gatier. Photo: Vladimir Partalo.

In addition to marking a homecoming for Pinault, the opening of the Bourse, also renovated by Ando, arrives on the heels of recent efforts to rehaul the Parisian art scene, long written off as less cool than Berlin’s and less important than London’s. In 2020 and 2021—global pandemic be damned!—French dealers Almine Rech, Nathalie Obadia, Kamel Mennour, and Emmanuel Perrotin inaugurated second, third, and fourth spaces in Paris. Spurred in part by Brexit, major international galleries including David Zwirner, Lévy Gorvy, Galleria Continua, and Massimo de Carlo landed in the city between 2019 and 2021. In recent years, FIAC, France’s largest international contemporary art fair, has steadily increased gallery participation, international representation, and sales.

Pinault’s museum is certainly a boon for Paris’s art scene. In addition to boasting one of the largest contemporary art collections in the world—some 10,000 artworks by 587 artists, according to *Le Monde*—the collector dutifully supports homegrown talent. The Bourse’s maiden show features mid-career French artists who are well-known on the international stage (Pierre Huyghe, Philippe Parreno), older local legends less familiar outside the country (Bertrand Lavier, Martial Raysse), and rising stars (Claire Tabouret, Lili Reynaud-Dewar).



A gallery of works by David Hammons. Bourse de Commerce – Pinault Collection, “Ouverture,” 2021. Photo: Aurélien Mole.

Looming over the galleries and lit from above by sunlight filtering through an enormous glass dome, *Triumphal France*, a fresco installed for the 1889 World’s Fair, glorifies the nation’s colonial exploits. As restored by Pinault, it now serves as a backdrop for artworks that confront histories of racism and empire. A gallery dedicated to David Hammons includes more than two-dozen works, including a tattered “African American flag” (*Untitled*, 2012) and *Minimum Security*, 2007–2020, a cage with metal bunk beds installed in front of another restored nineteenth-century painting, this one a giant map showing colonial trade routes. Figurative works by Kerry James Marshall, Ser Serpas, Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, Xinyi Cheng, and Antônio Obá fill numerous galleries, their canvases depicting black and brown people in contexts historical (Marshall’s reappropriated cartoon-style stereotype, *The Wonderful One*, 1986) as well as imaginary (Yiadom-Boakye’s *Resurrect The Oracle*, 2015, a luminously dark, Goyaesque painting of a man in a French *marinière* that redresses the absence of Black subjects in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European portraiture).



Views of Louise Lawler’s *Helms Amendment*, 1989 (left), and Sherrie Levine’s *After Russell Lee*, 2016 (right). Installation view, Bourse de Commerce – Pinault Collection, “Ouverture,” 2021. Photo: Aurélien Mole.

A highlight of the exhibition is a room devoted to conceptual photography by Michel Journiac, Louise Lawler, Sherrie Levine, Richard Prince, Cindy Sherman, and Martha Wilson. Journiac's 1974 photo essay *24 heures dans la vie d'une femme ordinaire* (24 hours in the life of an ordinary woman), in which the artist impersonates a middle-class mother going about her daily routine (housework, childcare) and living out her fantasies (fashion model, motorcycle babe), hangs alongside Lawler's sobering *Helms Amendment*, 1989, which captures the inhumanity of the 1987 senate vote against funding AIDS education and prevention. The political statement of Pinault's "Ouverture" is not something we see every day in French institutions—as it happens, around 90 percent of the works are on view for time first time since their acquisition. Ostentatious though it may be, a private collection of this scope and scale has the power to reshape the cultural landscape.

—Mara Hoberman

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