

# LFI

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## LOÏC BRÉARD

THE GEOMETRY OF  
MODERNITY. IMAGES  
OF BOLD BUILDINGS

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# URBAN DESIGNS

**PHOTOGRAPHY: LOÏC BRÉARD**

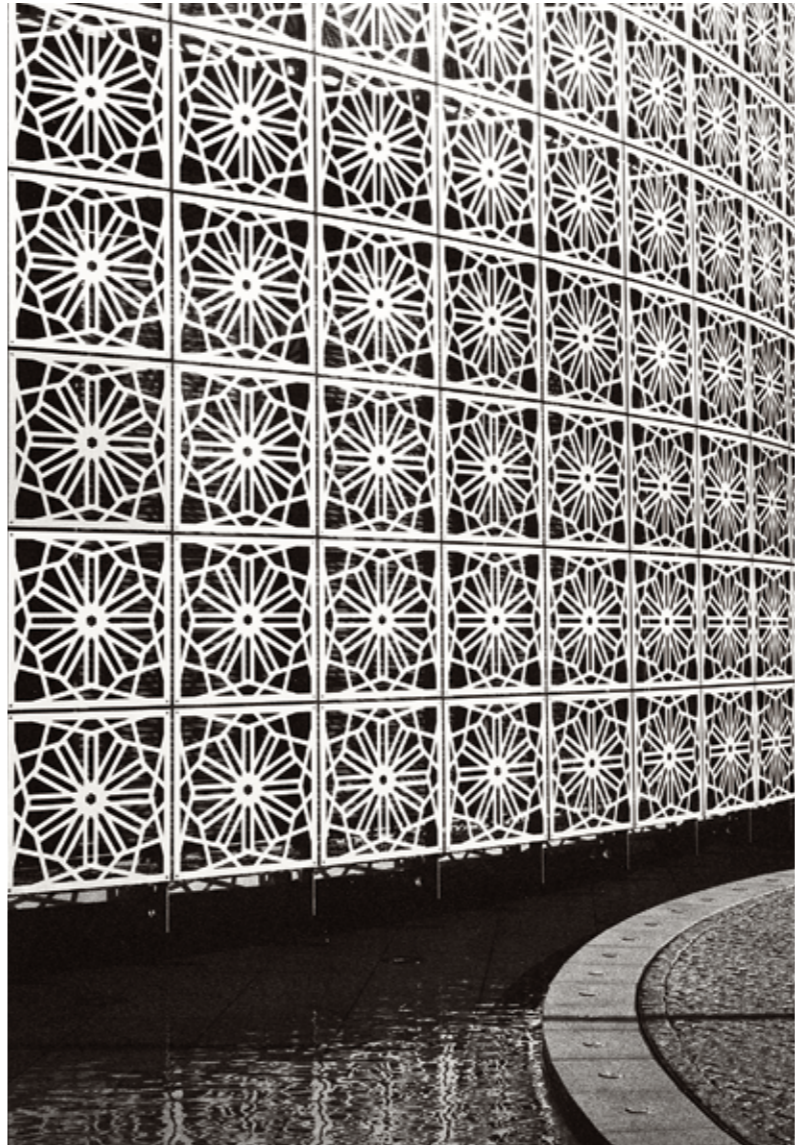
The lights and darks of urban development. French photo artist Loïc Bréard captures, with a personal, highly refined eye for composition, modern architecture in its many forms. Humanity and the will to create – two sides of the same coin, says Loïc Bréard. An exhibition of contrasts, shot with a Leica M6.

**The Palais de Chaillot  
in Paris was built for the  
World Expo in 1937**





Left: Oscar Niemeyer's Niterói Contemporary Art Museum, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, completed in 1991; below: Intricate patterns at the Saudi Arabian embassy, Berlin



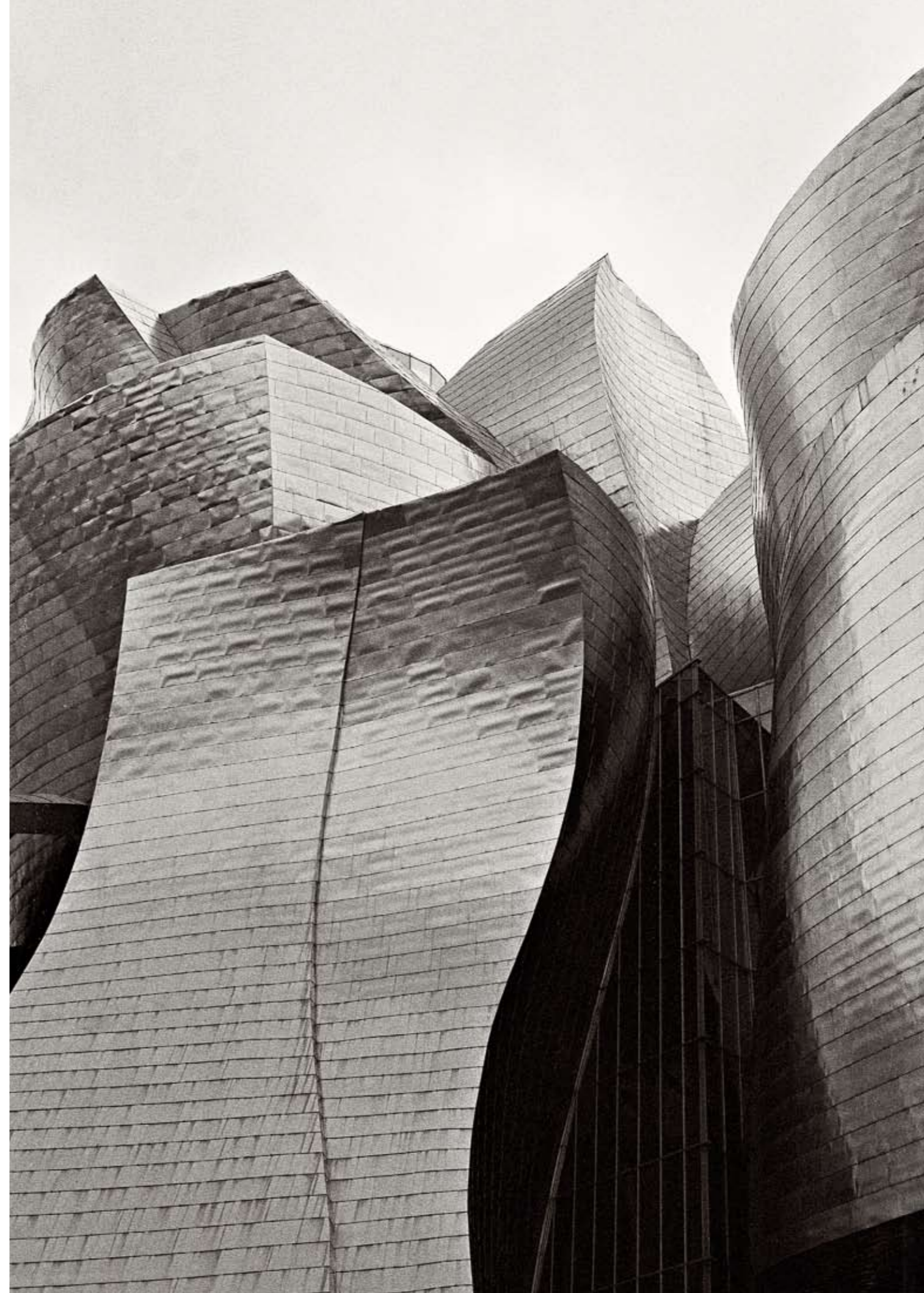
Built in 1984–1989, 'La Grande Arche de la Fraternité' in La Défense, Paris, was inaugurated on the day France celebrated 200 years since the revolution





**Right: The Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, was completed by designer Frank O. Gehry in 1997. A tribute to deconstructivism and a real tourist magnet**

**Left: The Guggenheim in Bilbao; below left: 'La Grande Arche de la Fraternité' in La Défense; below: Glass reflections on a façade in Rio de Janeiro**





Lights and darks.  
Abstract impressions of ZDF  
Studios at the Hamburg  
Deichtor Centre, a building  
designed by Hadi Teherani





Left: Force of construction:  
Gigantic steel carriers.  
Photographed in Bilbao in the  
north of Spain



Right: Potsdamer Platz in Berlin;  
below: Paris Charles de Gaulle.  
Following a seven year building  
period the airport opened in 1974



Below: Structure at the  
'Grande Arche de la Fraternité'  
in La Défense, Paris, head  
office of the French Ministry  
of Trade and Transport



Below: 'La Grande Arche de la Fraternité', the modern Arch  
of Triumph by Johan Otto von  
Spreckelsen and Paul Andreu;  
right: High riser in Cape Town



Nowadays, architectural photography has a tendency to be cool and reserved. Photographers prefer not to intervene but rather soberly document the work of the architect while striving to leave themselves completely out of the picture. The work of Hamburg-based photographer Loïc Bréard, on the other hand, is somewhat different: dramatic, perfectly composed and with a rather personal take on architectural details, structures & façades.



**Berlin Architecture: The Sony Center on Potsdamer Platz. The photographer is especially taken by the ceiling**

Bréard, who was born in the city of Nantes in France, has photographed buildings from many different eras. The Palais de Chaillot in Paris, for instance, was built by Louis Auguste Boileau, Léon Azème and Jacques Carlu for the World Expo in 1937 on the foundations of the former Trocadéro Palace. A neoclassical structure with long, curved, and imposing wings, Bréard was able to capture this exceptional edifice giving

it a clean and powerful aesthetic – “an extreme aesthetic,” as Bréard says himself. The Niterói Contemporary Art Museum, by comparison, is unlike anything else. Located in the state of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, it was built by Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer in 1996. Commonly likened to a UFO, Bréard decided to focus his lens on the architectural detail of this unusual design. Likewise, the photographer has been seen photographing the exotic,



**The wing of an aeroplane? Fascinating structural details at Paris Charles de Gaulle airport**

oriental décor of the Saudi Arabian embassy in Berlin. He has explored the plentiful surfaces and patterns of the post-modern ‘La Grande Arche de la Fraternité’ (1984–1989) in the Paris suburb of La Défense. And he has captured exciting perspectives of the remarkable Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain. Completed in 1997 by Canadian architect Frank Owen Gehry, this fascinating, deconstructive

complex is one of the city’s major tourist attractions today. To Bréard it was important to get close and focus on sections of the architecture, portraying it as a “giant, metallic balloon,” to use the photographer’s words, or as an “ocean of silver flames.”

Also intriguing and frequently visited by Loïc Bréard and his camera is the airport Paris Charles de Gaulle. This is where the photographer discovered his “waterfall of concrete,” in addition



**‘La Grande Arche de la Fraternité’ – the Big Arch. The white, adjustable canvas is an architectural highlight**

to overhead lights in the style of 1930s architecture, and structural details alluding to propeller airliners.

And then there’s Berlin and the stunning Sony Center on Potsdamer Platz, designed by German architect Helmut Jahn and inaugurated in 2000. Bréard mostly concentrated on framing the structure’s luminous tent ceiling with its remarkable cloth panels secured between the steel ring in the centre and

the seven surrounding buildings. The Shell House is another wonderful design from the classical modernist period, built in 1932 by the German architect Emil Fahrenkamp and, since 2000, owned by Berlin energy supplier GASAG. Bréard’s interpretation artistically presents the building’s characteristic rounded edges and wavy façade.

As we pore over Bréard’s pictures we discover a frequent involvement of refractions and reflections. The image



**Modern classic: The Shell House, head office of Berlin energy supplier GASAG, built in 1932 by designer Emil Fahrenkamp**

of a shiny surface mirroring the outside world is a classic theme of photography. By including the shimmering metallic surfaces and polished façades of modern high rise architecture, the photographer is able to visually fracture the image and thus introduce into his work a more subjective element – a technique brought to perfection by the masters of surrealism. However, none of these reflections, deformations or duplications

– none of his experimental tendencies, in fact – can conceal his classically elegant, technically perfect style. Bréard shoots with a Leica M6, mounted with a Summicron 50 mm f/2 or a Summicron 35 mm f/2 Asph, and loaded with Kodak 400 tx for classic black & white. “Black & white,” the photographer once said, “is unrivalled in the way that it appeals to what lays behind the façade, the truth within.” It is this depth – both in composition and in quality, as well

glazed surfaces and architectural combs, behind the geometrical structures of light and shadow, and behind the ornaments of modernity and post-modernity we find human beings – from the office buildings on Potsdamer Platz all the way to the dreary, cold high risers in Cape Town.

And there’s an oppressive air about Bréard’s architecture photography. He doesn’t deny the coldness, the flatness or even the malice of 20th and 21st century architecture. It is no coincidence



**Rather sober: The modernised Ostbahnhof in Berlin, one of the city’s most important traffic junctions**

when some of the details in his pictures resemble swords suspended in mid air. One of his pictures, taken in Rio de Janeiro, epitomises the brutality of modern building. Loïc Bréard calls it ‘The Caging of Humans’. MARC PESCHKE

**Exhibition: 16 October to 18 December 2009, Urban Sketches. Photographs by Loïc Bréard.**  
Galerie Hilaneh von Kories, Hamburg, Germany;  
[www.galeriehilanehvonkories.de](http://www.galeriehilanehvonkories.de)