



The Venet Foundation

Picture: Jerome Cavaliere, Marseille; courtesy Bernar Venet Archives, New York

ART TRAVEL

The Côte d'Azur's contemporary art trails

Away from the region's established galleries, two unconventional cultural attractions are drawing art fans to the Côte d'Azur's hinterland



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What with the Musée Renoir in Cagnes-sur-Mer, the Musée Picasso in Antibes, the galleries devoted to Chagall and Matisse in Nice, not to mention the Chapelle du Rosaire in Vence, the enchanting Musée de l'Annonciade in St-Tropez and private foundations such as the Fondation Marguérite and Aimé Maeght near St Paul de Vence, the Côte d'Azur and its hinterland abound in art galleries.

Opportunities to see contemporary art are more rare, but that changed last summer with the opening of the artist Bernar Venet's foundation near Le Muy, an hour's drive west of Cannes or north of Saint-Tropez. It is a showcase not only for his own installations, but for pieces by Donald Judd, Sol LeWitt



The Tube Bridge at the Venet Foundation

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(whom he knew), as well as the likes of Dan Flavin, Robert Morris, Robert Barry and Frank Stella. It was Stella who designed a chapel for the estate in collaboration with the architect and yacht designer IPI (hence its carbonfibre construction and sail-inspired roof), in which hang six of his paintings. In total there are more than 100 works to be seen on the 10-acre grounds, the site of an 18th-century sawmill overlooking the Nartuby river.

Earlier this month a second privately owned sculpture park, Domaine du Muy, opened near the same village in the Bonne Eau valley. The creation of Jean Gabriel Mitterrand (owner of the eponymous gallery in Paris's Marais), together with his son Edward Mitterrand (respectively nephew and great nephew of the former president), it consists of another 10-acre site, a rugged hilly terrain of cork oaks, pines and maquis bisected by a river.

The park winds a trail of about a mile and a half that takes you past 38 installations curated, in collaboration with Edward Mitterrand, by Simon Lamunière, formerly of Art Basel. The newly and recently commissioned site-specific works by Claudia Comte, Vidya Gastldon, Sol LeWitt, David Saltiel



Yayoi Kusama's Narcissais Garden at Domaine du Muy

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and Tomas Saraceno are intended to interact with the landscape, while others – by Keith Haring, Niki de St Phalle and, located on the lake, Yayoi Kusama – date back to the 1960s, 70s and 80s. Other major names whose work is featured include Antony Gormley, Subodh Gupta, Mark Handforth, Carsten Höller, Claude and François-Xavier Lalanne and Arik Levy.

Next year a house, with interiors by India Mahdavi, will also open on the site. Don't however, expect it to be filled with paintings. As Edward Mitterrand put it to me: "Really I think the only interesting thing about painting today is talk of its death."

Guided tours at the [Venet Foundation](#) run on Thursday afternoons and all day Friday until the autumn; reservations essential. [Le Domaine du Muy](#) is open until October; visits are strictly by appointment