

616 views | Feb 5, 2019, 11:56am

# Jean Michel Wilmotte, The Art of Architecture



**Cecilia Pelloux** Contributor ⓘ  
Travel

In November, I sat down with Jean-Michel Wilmotte in his office in Paris, rue du Faubourg Saint-Antoine, the headquarters of Wilmotte & Associés. For more than 40 years, Jean-Michel Wilmotte and his team are leading projects all over the world and are working in 28 countries. Today, W&A unites 272 architects, urban planners, designers, museography specialists and interior designers. Recently the firm completed in Paris: Station F, the world's biggest startup campus, the Russian Orthodox Spiritual and Cultural Center, and the refurbishment of the Hotel Lutetia. Other recent commissions for the practice include the Sciences Po Campus and the Austerlitz Train Station in Paris, the European University of Saint Petersburg in Russia, ArcelorMittal worldwide new headquarters in Luxembourg, **Bleu** Ciel residential tower in Dallas and the UN headquarters for West Africa in Senegal. Here is my interview.



Jean-Michel Wilmotte at Station F in Paris LUC CASTEL

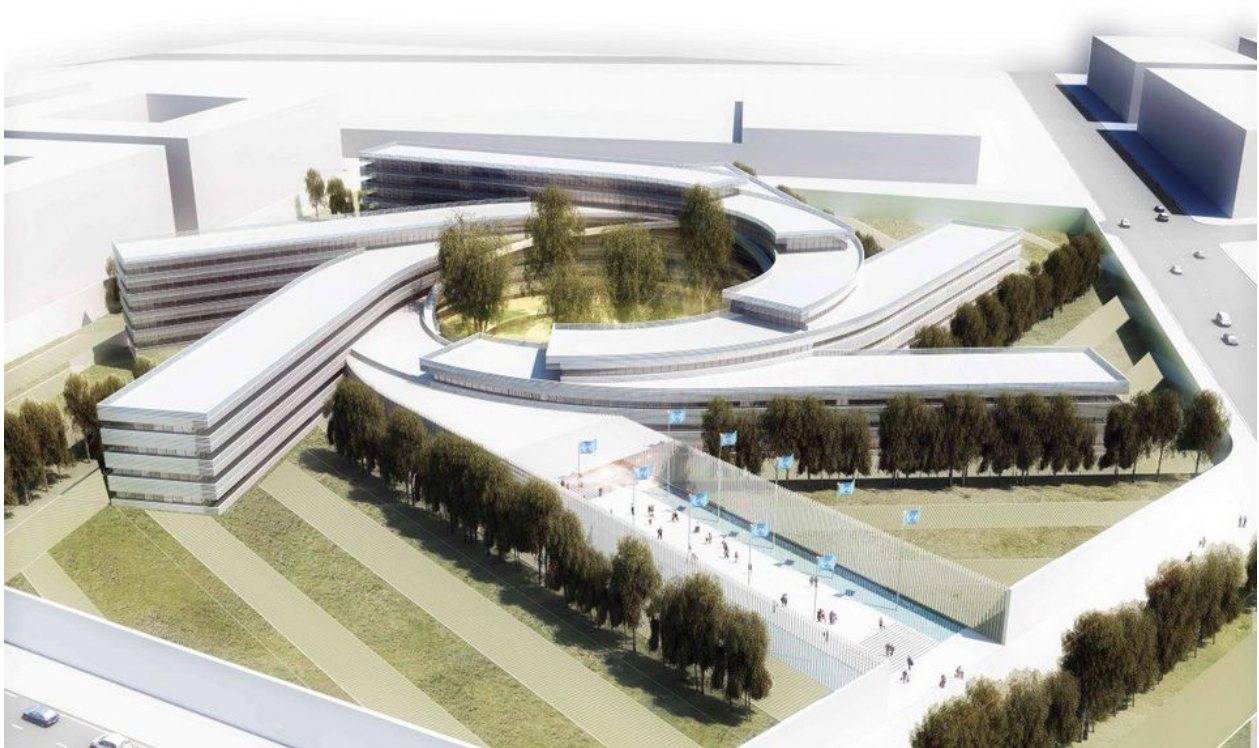
### **What could we learn from your exceptional career?**

I do like this job in spite of the difficulties because it is my passion! I belong to a generation that expresses itself depending on the geopolitical and human situation. When we live in an era, we share the same political, geographical, intellectual, artistic and life elements. When you are a creative person, an architect, all your projects are the results of the combination of those elements that makes who you are.

### **How could you describe your career?**

I would say that my career is very diverse. From the Allianz Riviera stadium in Nice to an Orthodox Cathedral in Paris, the headquarters of The United Nations for West Africa in Senegal or a Tower in Dallas, I like the diversity of my work and that makes it very interesting. I think the most important is to be true and not to be influenced by trends and others thoughts. It is not always easy as there are a

lot of influences, contingencies and laws. I think we need to be a lot more concerned by human projects. It is also important to work on public spaces and not only on private ones. We have to adapt our knowledges continually. Recently, we have built a very luxurious chalet in Courchevel but we have also worked on an affordable housing project for local people in the ski resort. It's important to stay in the reality of the world we live in. For example, we have been involved in the urban vision of the Greater Moscow but we have worked on an urban project in a small village near the Enclaves des Papes in France. This diversity of scales is very fascinating. Town planning is interesting but we also need to focus our attention on smaller scale projects. In France, rural spaces are deserted and it is really sad. Last week I was in Champagne Pouilleuse area, I did not see anybody, maybe just one or two cars, and all the stores were closed. We -architects- have to try to bring back life in those areas, and to balance empty and dense areas. I am obviously lucky but I also provoked my luck. Today, we work on different scales projects but when I started, we only did interior design then private furniture projects. Wilmotte & Associés is currently an international design practice with a multicultural team and works in 28 countries around the world.



Headquarters of United Nations for West Africa in Senegal WILMOTTE & ASSOCIÉS

## How do you define the architectural grafting?

This issue is really important to me. The architectural grafting is a dialogue between the heritage and a contemporary design. For example, a beautiful but abandoned monastery could be transformed into a museum or a housing but the building is too small. Then, there are two options, one is the pastiche that I hate, and the second is the architectural grafting. The grafting is the result of an elegant marriage between an existing building -whose history we respect- and a contemporary one using new technologies and knowledge.

## YOU MAY ALSO LIKE

---

---

---

---

### **What is the main mission of your foundation whose gallery is located in Venice?**

The main mission is to encourage and raise awareness around the architectural grafting, to give opportunities to students in architecture and young professionals who do not really learn this topic at school. We launch a European competition every two years, the Prix W award, and then support the laureates. We publish a book about their works and we give them a scholarship. Today, we have a network of 6,000 young architects in 400 schools thanks to our award.



Sciences Po Campus in Paris WILMOTTE & ASSOCIÉS

**You are a member of Académie des Beaux-Arts in France. What does this membership represent for you?**

I am really honored to be part of this French official institution. The Academy gathers all the Arts: music, painting, sculpture, engraving, cinema, choreography, photography and architecture. It is so great to be able to meet at the same time a colleague who is an architect, a musician or a great photographer. Together, we reflect and discuss on really interesting topics. It is incredible to have so many creative people in one place.

**Since 2010, Wilmotte and Associés has been one of the 100 largest architectural firms, do you still have challenges?**

Yes, I have many. Two big challenges. The first one is to work deeply in quality on our projects and the second one which is very important is the transmission of cultural heritage. I am really interested by this topic. One more challenge is to do well all what I have to do now.



Bleu Ciel Tower in Dallas WILMOTTE & ASSOCIÉS

**Where do you like to travel?**

I love travelling in Europe, Reykjavik and Lisbon. France of course. And Italy, Pouilles, Roma, Venezia. I simply love cities. Just wandering around and discovering! Walking in the streets of Roma is my best way to regain strength. I love Venezia because there are no cars and no barriers. You really feel free. I like the fact that we can get lost in Venezia through Le Ghetto, Cannaregio, the Hospital. We can walk without meeting any tourist and this is fabulous. Russia is another country that I appreciate. I love the culture, the people, the cities. I love taking the train from Moscow to St. Petersburg. Chatting with local people and enjoying the beautiful landscape during winter.

**I read your book *Dictionnaire Amoureux of Architecture*, how did you pick your 200 words?**

The selection was so hard. In fact, I took the end part of my agenda with the alphabetical order and during one year I wrote almost a word per day. I got 350 entries and they published 200. This project was very long but very interesting, it took me four years to do it! I discovered outstanding places and it is too bad that there are not in the book! But I'm really proud of having done this *Dictionnaire Amoureux*.



Future sport center of French Soccer Team PSG WILMOTTE & ASSOCIÉS

*Cecilia Pelloux*

**Cecilia Pelloux** Contributor

I've ran a luxury communication and PR agency operating in St Barths, New York, London, Moscow and Switzerland for more than seven years. I am a world traveler and I have lived in Aix en Provence, Tahiti, Paris, New York, St. Barths and Switzerland.

87,491 views | Feb 9, 2019, 09:52am

# Celebrating The 2019 School Counselors Of The Year



**Stephanie Sprow Owens** Brand Contributor  
Civic Nation **BRANDVOICE**

*“School counselors have the power to make a difference in the lives of students everywhere, and that’s why they’re some of the greatest champions for Reach Higher. To all of you out there, thank you so much for helping our students see that their dreams are within reach!” — [Michelle Obama](#)*

For the 5th year in a row, [Reach Higher](#) joined the [American School Counselor Association](#) (ASCA) to celebrate the unsung heroes of K-12 education—school counselors. This year, ASCA recognized 45 school counselors from across the country. These men and women traveled to Washington, D.C., from January 30th to February 1st to speak with congressional leaders and officials on Capitol Hill and the Department of Education to advocate for the school counseling profession, and celebrate each other like never before.



Dr. Jill Biden and 2019 ASCA School Counselor of the Year Brian Coleman COURTESY OF CHUCK KENNEDY

This year, the school counselors were greeted by Dr. Jill Biden, the former Second Lady of the United States and a lifelong educator, at the [School Counselor of the Year event](#). “Love, kindness, guidance—these are the things that give us strength, that allow us to thrive—even when our home life is difficult, even when money is tight, even when we don’t quite know who we are,” she said. “Those are the gifts you all give to your students every day: a light for their path, kindness to help them grow, and love for themselves.”

Dr. Biden introduced this year's School Counselor of the Year, [Brian Coleman](#), a high school counselor and counseling department chair from Jones College Prep in Chicago, Illinois. He pursued the school profession after college to “support,

validate, and affirm the next generation of leaders and change agents.” At the event, in collaboration with Ed Trust and ASCA, we put out a [fact sheet](#) that highlighted the importance and need for more school counselors in schools.



Brian Coleman is a high school counselor and counseling department chair from Jones College Prep in Chicago, Illinois. COURTESY OF CHUCK KENNEDY

Later that evening, Brian was formally recognized at the [School Counselor of the Year Awards Gala](#). He left the guests in the room in stitches and tears—his passion and dedication for his students and the school counseling profession was evident with [every word he said](#).

### 2019 School Counselor of the Year Ceremony!



“We as educators and school counselors [must] really reflect on what makes us special, because if we can really identify for ourselves what makes us special what draws us to this work we can do in this work that no one else can do, we can begin to model that for our students and see those unique special qualities in them,” he passionately shared with his fellow honorees and guests.



From left: Brad Jenkins, Sarah Hurwitz, Dr. John B. King joined Eric Waldo onstage. COURTESY OF ALAN NGUYEN

Additionally, Reach Higher hosted its annual salon dinner at the Dupont Circle Hotel in Washington, D.C. We were joined by the school counselor finalists, our Reach Higher Advisory Board, and partners who came to celebrate the work of school counselors. Our host was the star of the Food Network’s popular series, *Chopped*, [Ted Allen](#), and famed New York City Michelin-starred chef [Bill Telepan](#) led a team to prepare a dinner inspired by childhood memories. While guests munched on top-notch grilled cheese sandwiches and smores, Eric Waldo engaged Obama White House officials [Sarah Hurwitz](#), author and former lead

speechwriter for Michelle Obama; [Brad Jenkins](#), former associate director of the White House Office of Public Engagement; and [Dr. John B. King](#), president and CEO of The Education Trust and former U.S. Secretary of Education, in a conversation about the importance of storytelling, lifting up education and educators, and how we celebrate the things that really matter.

We would like to thank our dedicated partners for joining us in person and in spirit. Our work to support students' dreams of higher education would not be possible without them. Special recognition goes to all of those—especially the school counselors themselves—who help to make higher education a reality for our nation's students. Your tireless efforts never goes unnoticed.



School counselors' tireless efforts never goes unnoticed. COURTESY OF CHUCK KENNEDY



**Stephanie Sprow Owens** Brand Contributor

Stephanie Sprow Owens serves as the Deputy Director of Reach Higher at Civic Nation. In her role, she serves as an advisor to former First Lady Michelle Obama regarding high school and post-secondary completion and leads campaigns to support students' efforts to go to and c...

**Read More**

99,051 views | Feb 20, 2019, 06:00pm

## Best Wine Coolers



**Forbes Finds** Contributor Group ⓘ

Style & Design

---

*For product reviews, gift ideas, and latest deals, Subscribe to the [Forbes Finds newsletter](#).*

---



**Forbes Finds** Contributor

---

ForbesFinds is a shopping service for our readers. Forbes searches premium retailers to find the new products — from clothes to gadgets — and the latest deals.

---



**Forbes Finds** Contributor Group

---

Forbes Finds is a shopping service for our readers. Forbes searches premium retailers to find the new products — from clothes to gadgets — and the latest deals. Forbes Finds covers products we think you'll love. Featured products are independently selected and linked to fo... **Read More**

---