

Support for Villa Kujoyama,
Villa Albertine and Villa Medici

Craftsmanship & global reach

The Foundation deepens its commitment

Spring 2026.
The 5th anniversary
of Villa Albertine.
Events details and
residents' comments.



Fondation
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New horizons for French craftsmanship

Since 1999, the Foundation has been deeply committed to supporting a wide range of craftsmanship. International expansion is the key to accelerating these efforts. The Foundation took its first steps toward this goal in 2014 when it forged a partnership with the major French cultural residencies abroad. For 12 years, we have offered craftspeople the chance to both immerse themselves in another culture and promote their work and creations across borders.

Today, the international residency model continues to meet the expectations and targets we had set. We have therefore decided to renew our commitment to Villa Albertine and to Villa Kujoyama in Kyoto through 2031, and to Villa Medici in Rome through 2029. We felt it was essential to be able to expand our reach on three continents through these long-term actions.

This year is a special one for Villa Albertine, which is celebrating its fifth anniversary. It also marks 250 years of Franco-American friendship. We are pleased that, for this dual anniversary, the craftspeople we have supported over the years will have the opportunity to present their accomplishments, know-how and creativity to a wide audience in New York, in diverse yet complementary environments.

Françoise Bettencourt Meyers
President of the Fondation Bettencourt Schueller



Aurélie Lanoiselée, embroiderer, textile designer and winner of the Liliane Bettencourt Prize pour l'Intelligence de la Main® - Talents d'exception 2009 and 2026 Villa Kujoyama resident.
© Thierry Caron/Divergence (top)

Hands at work, Anais Jarnoux and Samuel Tomatis, winners of the Liliane Bettencourt Prize pour l'Intelligence de la Main® - Dialogues 2022.
© Ambroise Tézenas (bottom)

© Stéphane de Bourgies (top right)

The Foundation Expands the Global Reach of French Craftsmanship

The Fondation Bettencourt Schueller has been a patron of Villa Kujoyama in Kyoto since 2014, and of Villa Albertine in the United States and Villa Medici in Rome since the 2020s. It is now renewing and increasing this support for the next five years. This is a major initiative, in line with the commitment it first made more than 25 years ago to promote our craftsmanship, in France and abroad.

The Foundation's mission since 1999 has been to emphasize the dignity of French craftsmanship, help craftspeople pursue excellence, and support their business growth. It has worked tirelessly to enhance its original commitment by sponsoring new projects. The Liliane Bettencourt Prize pour l'Intelligence de la Main® (awarded for "Intelligence of the Hand") was created in 1999 and has been used to promote this exceptional know-how. The Foundation has also entered into numerous partnerships with schools and institutions that share the same goals. These initiatives have all played a role in transforming this universe, and how it is viewed by the cultural world and the general public. Crafts are a manifestation of the broad aspirations of the times (search for meaning, responsible and sustainable commitment, etc.) and have become a strategic sector, one that creates value and jobs. Craftspeople continue to find their way and are increasingly embracing modernity, by incorporating new technologies, developing synergies with other creators and meeting the expectations of a market in search of excellence and know-how.

The goal: promote culture, innovation, and immersion in the ecosystem

It was only natural that this 180° shift be accompanied by international expansion, which the Foundation initiated in 2014 when it agreed to become the primary sponsor of Villa Kujoyama in Kyoto. Since the 2020s, it has also provided support to Villa Albertine in the United States and Villa Medici in Rome. The goal is to provide a unique immersive experience to the craftspeople hosted at these French cultural residencies abroad, and to raise the profile of craftsmanship worldwide. To that end, the Foundation takes advantage of the specific characteristics of each location when developing all its projects: a showcase for French and European excellence at Villa Medici; a hub for dialogue, interdisciplinarity and innovation at Villa Kujoyama; and access to one of the most dynamic markets in the world at Villa Albertine. Focusing on this complementarity within its overall philanthropic activities has allowed the Foundation to develop an ecosystem in which it can target different key levers: culture, interdisciplinarity and innovation, and the markets.

Double the support for more effective projects

Its many success stories attest to the effectiveness of its method. The Foundation has therefore decided to renew its support for the next five years and to double the amounts allocated. It has stayed true to its approach to support, and has continued its productive dialogue with the directors of the Villas and their teams to define the overall framework for these renewals after evaluating its current actions: establishment of research grants to heighten the impact of projects at Villa Kujoyama; expansion of the immersion and post-residency grants to increase the potential to access the US market at Villa Albertine; and extension of the "Re-enchanting Villa Medici" project with the renovation of sixteen new spaces at Villa Medici. Below are just some of the major projects that will be maintained through 2031. These philanthropic actions all reflect the same purpose: unwavering support for French craftsmanship.

In the workshop with Fanny Boucher, gravure printer, winner of the Liliane Bettencourt Prize pour l'Intelligence de la Main® - Talents d'exception 2020. © Sophie Zénon



Villa Albertine: Foster Immersion in the American Ecosystem, One of the Most Influential in the World

In 2021, the Foundation broadened its international development with support for the creation of Villa Albertine, a new French cultural residency program in the United States. The concept behind Villa Albertine, an institute of the French Embassy in the United States, was a novel one, with the aim of forging artistic and cultural ties with major local players. It represents a unique development opportunity for French craftspeople and a way to promote all of our know-how.

Based on its experience in Japan with Villa Kujoyama, the Foundation decided, in 2021, to scale up its contribution to promoting craftsmanship abroad. It thus played a role in creating this new artistic residency program inaugurated by France in the United States.

Called Albertine, in tribute to Proust's heroine whose name was given to the bookstore the French Embassy opened in New York in 2014, this 21st century villa reinvents the traditional artistic residency model by taking a contemporary approach that factors in the specificities of the United States, abandons the single location principle for a presence across the entire United States, and seeks to forge cultural, artistic and professional ties.

This ambitious vision resonated with the Foundation, which decided to support the project by including craftsmanship and setting three goals: increase the visibility of French creation in the United States, develop partnerships with the country's cultural institutions, and promote interactions between craftspeople and major players on the US market, one of the most dynamic in the world.

A special focus on connecting with professionals

With this in mind, the Foundation supports a residency program that allows five craftspeople to spend time in the United States every year. Residents can choose from among ten cities to find the best fit for their project. With the benefit of two years of hindsight, the Foundation's support has evolved and it now provides artisans with post-residency assistance so they can continue on their journey. Actions might include production initiatives, exhibitions, or participation in specialized trade fairs. Since 2023, the Foundation has helped develop a dedicated week in New York during *Design Week*, a major sector event. It also supports *Oui Design!*, an initiative sponsored by Villa Albertine. Designed as an



2025 *Oui Design!* exhibition
at Villa Albertine featuring works
by Céline Blundell,
Julia Debord-Dany, Cécile Gray,
Mathilde Martin, Pierre-Yves Morel,
Alice Riehl, Fanny Serouart
and Julien Vermeulen.
Scenography by Aurore Vullierme.
© Philippe Stouvenot (top)

© William Jess Laird (bottom)

arts and crafts crawl, this event promotes French offerings to the public through programming organized at partner companies and showrooms, supplemented by an exhibition that highlights the works of the artisans in residence.

The growing influence of the French scene

Its five years of experience show that Villa Albertine offers a compelling model. With its novel interplay between the artistic and economic components, this innovative program has emerged as a groundbreaking project in the international artistic residency landscape. It has created a highly virtuous circle in the crafts world where craftspeople benefit from increased individual visibility and the French design scene gains recognition and influence.

In this context, the Foundation decided to increase the amount of its support for the next five years. After a series of discussions with Mohamed Bouabdallah, Cultural Counselor of the French Embassy in the United States and Director of Villa Albertine, and his teams, it decided to become the exclusive patron of Villa Albertine's crafts and design program. Every year, this program comprises five residencies and five grants for a 10-day immersion experience in New York, giving recipients opportunities to connect with American professionals, and with interior architects and designers in particular.

The Foundation will also continue to support *Oui Design!*, which has become a must-see annual French creation event in New York. The 2026 edition will be a special one, marking the fifth anniversary of Villa Albertine and the Foundation's presence at its side, as well as 250 years of US independence and Franco-American friendship. This year of celebration will be an ideal opportunity to expand the reach our craftsmanship, and Villa Albertine will play a full part in this mission.



2025 *Oui Design!* exhibition at Villa Albertine. Works by Mathilde Martin, 2025 *Oui Design!* grantee, scenography by Aurore Vullierme. © Cécile Gray (bottom left)

2025 *Oui Design!* exhibition at Villa Albertine. Works by Julia Debord-Dany, Villa Albertine Crafts and Design resident, scenography by Aurore Vullierme. © Cécile Gray (bottom right)



2026 to 2031. The impact of the new support

→ **€1.9 million**, the amount of support proposed, or €350,000 per year. The previous support (2021-2026) was €788,800.

→ **5 crafts and design residencies** per year, of which 3 for crafts.

→ **5 professional immersion grants** per year in New York.

→ **5 post-residency projects** per year.

→ **More than 20 French and American actors** coming together every year in New York in May for events that promote French craftsmanship.

The US decor and furnishings market by the numbers*

→ The US interior design market is estimated at more than **\$26 billion**, and is expected to grow at a steady pace of 2.9%/year until 2028.

→ The average budget for decor in the United States is **\$8,000 to \$12,000 per household** (renovation or interior design).

→ Hospitality market expenditure on design: **\$42 billion** invested per year in hotel and restaurant design.

→ Growth in the US luxury market is **7% per year**, with high-end decor having a strong impact on the sector.

* Source: Business France 2023

Mohamed Bouabdallah,
Cultural Counselor of the French Embassy in the United States
and Director of Villa Albertine

“The United States,
a land of unique opportunities
for French craftsmanship.”

Superior know-how is very highly regarded in the United States, and the country's response reflects the curiosity it inspires and the vitality of the creative world around it. For French craftspeople, this place is now a particularly stimulating environment for expression and promotion. It is this belief that guides Villa Albertine's commitment to craftsmanship on the other side of the Atlantic.

As soon as it was founded in 2021 and with the support of the Fondation Bettencourt Schueller, Villa Albertine launched a research residency program in the United States that hosts five to six craftspeople and designers each year. Our decision reflects the importance we place on this know-how, which is both heir to a prestigious tradition and also deeply modern. These residencies give creators a crucial period of freedom to experiment and reinvigorate their practice. They are also an opportunity to draw on new sources of inspiration in the American environment, forge innovative collaborations and establish a long-term presence for French crafts in the United States.

Since 2023, we have partnered with the Manufactures Nationales – Sèvres & Mobilier National to roll out ambitious programming, in particular through the *Oui Design!* exhibition. This program is organized every year in New York in May as part of the *NYCxDesign Festival*, one of the sector's major events. This exhibition allows US audiences to discover exceptional creators who have a singular vision of French creation.

The 2026 event has a particularly impressive line-up to celebrate the Villa's fifth anniversary. It showcases the work of Lily Alcaraz and Léa Berlier, textile designers; Atelier Monier, a wood-working shop specializing in chairmaking; Yassine Ben Abdallah, designer; Nicolas Pinon,

lacquerer; Céline Salomon, ceramic artist; Sophia Taillet, artist-designer; Juliette Tellier, transdisciplinary designer; and Frantz Wehrlé, decorative painter; as well as the Xolo Cuintle duo of artist-designers, with scenography created by Harry Nuriev. Their stay in New York also includes a 10-day professional immersion program, designed to foster interactions with players in the US crafts ecosystem.

We also designed a special itinerary in the city, which highlights French creation through events organized at partner companies and showrooms. The work of feather artist Julien Vermeulen, winner of *Oui Design!* in 2025 and of the Liliane Bettencourt Prize pour l'Intelligence de la Main® in 2018, will be shown at *Par Excellence*. The Invisible Collection will take that opportunity to exhibit the three winners of the 26th edition of this prize.

The 2026 *Oui Design!* event will bring other winners of the Liliane Bettencourt Prize pour l'Intelligence de la Main® into dialogue with previous Crafts and Design residents of Villa Albertine, shown at the Amélie du Chalard gallery, at the Todd Merrill Studio, and in an exhibition curated by Crina Arghirescu Rogard and Aurore Vullierme at the historic American Thread Building.

These initiatives are our way of supporting the next generation of craftspeople on what is both a promising and challenging market. In a highly competitive environment, it is important to emphasize what makes French creation strong: superior know-how, but also the ability to reinvent itself, be in dialogue with its times and propose new forms. It is this vibrant, bold and open-minded modernity that Villa Albertine intends to bring to and champion in the United States.



© Cyrille de la Motte Rouge



© John Bartelstone



© Nicolas Anglade

Steven Leprizé, artisan cabinetmaker,
in residence at the Villa in 2022

“The experience helped me streamline
my workshop and develop
an even more professional approach.”

“I had the good fortune to be invited to a residency at Villa Albertine in 2022 and that stay was a turning point for me. I made many contacts while I was there and met two French artisans, Steaven Richard and Emmanuel Barrois, who wanted to set up a company in the United States. I joined forces with them and we created +33 Collectif, to combine our energies and pool the costs associated with this location: travel, hiring a salesperson, etc. Our manufacturing is done in France in our workshops, and we ship our pieces. We offer furnishings, textures and materials, and have already completed our first project, a made-to-measure pool table for a private client. Business has been somewhat slow due to the current geopolitical environment, but this experience has, more broadly, changed how

I think about my company. It has become more international, thanks to a meeting in New York with the team from The Invisible Collection gallery, which has sold two of my works and is currently featuring five of my pieces. I also learned that these days the best architecture firms are located in Paris and New York, and I am lucky to now be known to these ecosystems. Lastly, this experience helped me streamline my workshop and develop an even more professional approach. I think I have always been able to deliver in terms of know-how, but my standards have become even higher. I am more responsive about sending proposals and quotes, I meet all my deadlines to the day, etc. That’s the rule in the United States, but also adds value in every country, including France.”

Romain Jouffre, director of the Jouffre workshops

“The Villa acted as a catalyst for the entire ecosystem
of French craftspeople in the USA.”

“Our artisanal upholstery and drapery business was created in 1987 in Lyon by my father, Charles Jouffre. We have three activities—we make custom upholstery (sofa, armchairs, headboards, etc.), create window treatments (drapes, sheers, shades, etc.) and manufacture wall upholstery for projects around the world. My father began working with American architects in 1995. At that time, our manufacturing was in Lyon and we had just one commercial entity there. He decided to open a subsidiary in 2001, as the contracts were starting to roll in. In 2013, we were approached about a major project in the Hamptons but, to win it, we had to manufacture in the United States. My father took the plunge and opened a workshop in Queens. This was the turning point. I joined the company

in 2014 and together with my team, we grew the business to where it is now: we have about 60 employees in the United States, including more than 35 artisans.

This location puts us close to our clients and our job sites, and that has made all the difference. For the last five years, we have maintained valuable relationships with Villa Albertine, which has included us in its *Oui Design!* event. In 2023, it suggested that we hold a big celebration at our workshop, where we hosted more than 1,000 guests. This helped us forge closer ties with major players in the sector, who were invited by the Villa.

There is no doubt that the Villa acts as a catalyst for its residents, but also for the entire ecosystem of craftspeople in the United States.”

© Pierre Chermette



Isabelle Dubern-Mallevays, co-founder of The Invisible Collection gallery

“Invisible Collection is exhibiting the Foundation’s winners in New York for the first time.”

“We created Invisible Collection in 2016. It is the first online gallery focused on exceptional and collectible furnishings created by major French design talent. The idea is to feature the beautiful works and know-how that make France the cradle of the decorative arts. Invisible Collection now exhibits in its galleries and supports about 200 designers and craftspeople, selected for their superior know-how and their alignment with our philosophy. This commitment, which I call the soft power of design, has naturally prompted us to partner with Mobilier National, the Fondation Bettencourt Schueller and Villa Albertine.

I have been a member of the selection jury for the Villa’s crafts residents for the last two years and I have been impressed by the applicants’ level of excellence, which appeals to a US audience

of curious, cultivated collectors. That is why we are showing the three 2025 winners of the Foundation’s Prize pour l’Intelligence de la Main in our gallery during *TEFAF week* and the *Oui Design!* festival. The pieces will remain on exhibit for a six-month period. The works will accompany the creations of architects Virginie and Nathalie Droulers, as well as furnishings from Maison Leleu, which has been revitalized by Jules Leleu’s great-granddaughter Alexia. From its founding, the gallery has been open to the US market and, in particular, to the New York market, which is home to 50% of the world’s art collectors. And while geopolitics can complicate things, French craftsmanship is unsurpassed in the eyes of Americans, who throng to our gallery on the Upper East Side for every exhibition.”



© Invisible Collection



© Cyrille de la Motte Rouge

Chloé Bensahel, textile artist, Villa resident in 2024

“My residency at MIT gave me the opportunity to develop my know-how with unmatched technology.”

I am a graduate of the Parsons School in New York and define myself as a textile artist. I am interested in the ancient and contemporary facets of textiles. I weave materials steeped in stories – paper with texts, shirts belonging to strangers. I spent my residency at the Villa in 2024 at the MIT Media Lab in Boston, where I studied the relationship between weaving and the research conducted in the 1960s for space missions. At that time, NASA was hiring weavers and employing techniques utilized in weaving (which also uses binary code) to store information and design technological textiles. Many research groups at this innovation hub continue to develop new textiles. While I was there, I adapted my know-how to innovation, making samples for scientists who wanted to see their

research applied to the material. One engineer, for example, developed a thread-based computer, but the fiber wound up being very fragile. So I worked to strengthen the material to make it weavable. During this three-month residency, I had the opportunity to learn about new technologies that help with weaving. I wove on a programmable loom which selects the threads to be picked up at the right pace. At the end of my residency, I was asked to continue my collaboration with the Media Lab. The project I am working on right now involves conductive thread and is more closely related to lace know-how. This residency opened up unique horizons for me and gave me the opportunity to develop my know-how with unmatched technology.”



© Offard

François Xavier Richard, founder of the Offard workshop, Villa resident in 2023

“Fresh impetus and a more international profile for my business.”

“In 1999, I founded the Offard workshop, which is dedicated to recreating and creating block-printed wallpaper and, more broadly, to elevating paper. We work for fashion houses and architecture firms, etc. As a 2009 winner of the Prize pour l’Intelligence de la Main, I had the opportunity to go to Villa Kujoyama and then to Villa Albertine in 2023.

I was based in New Jersey, where I joined Frontline Paper, an association for US Army veterans where paper is made from uniform fabric as a cathartic way to process the traumas of war. The idea is to transform a painful memory into a material that becomes a work of art. This extraordinary experience resonated with the way I think about paper as a tool for embodying and humanizing memory and thought.

This residency was very rewarding. Relationship-wise, I formed a very strong bond with the director of the association and we are still thinking about creating a “Paper City” – like Aubusson for tapestry – in France and the United States.

Career-wise, I was able to make many contacts and seize certain opportunities during my stay. I met the gallerist Amélie Ducharlard and worked with her on an installation in New York in 2024. In 2025, I worked with Villa Albertine and Mobilier National on scenography for *Design Miami*, which won a prize. There is no question that my experience in the United States gave my business fresh impetus and a more international profile.”

Odile Hainaut, co-founder of WantedDesign, co-director of the ICFF fair

“We help craftspeople take advantage of all the opportunities on the US market.”

“Claire Pijoulat and I have co-directed the *New York ICFF design fair* since 2022. It takes place in May and has gained real momentum with a younger audience and a new vision, mainly through the Wanted feature focused on emerging scenes and schools.

We also launched *WantedDesign*, a services platform that plays a major role in promoting young craftspeople, many of them French. Through our membership program, we offer online talks where key people in the industry tell their story and share their experience. Another session, called Academy, provides customized answers to questions. Lastly, *WantedDesign* functions as a social club, creating a community where creatives can discuss best practices and make new contacts. *WantedDesign* has partnered with Villa Albertine

since its creation, and it supports designers and craftspeople throughout their residency or during the week-long immersion program. We therefore assist them to the best of our ability, opening the doors to the fair to them and connecting them with major industry players so they can build their network.

This year, fourteen French artisans and designers are also part of the *ICFF fair*, as is Mobilier National, which will present its research on sustainable materials. More broadly, we foster collaboration between cultural organizations and seek to create real synergies between the cultural and commercial components with just one goal: raise the profile of French craftsmanship and allow our craftspeople to take advantage of all the opportunities on the US market.”



Villa Kujoyama, a Place Like No Other for Dialogue, Interdisciplinarity and Innovation

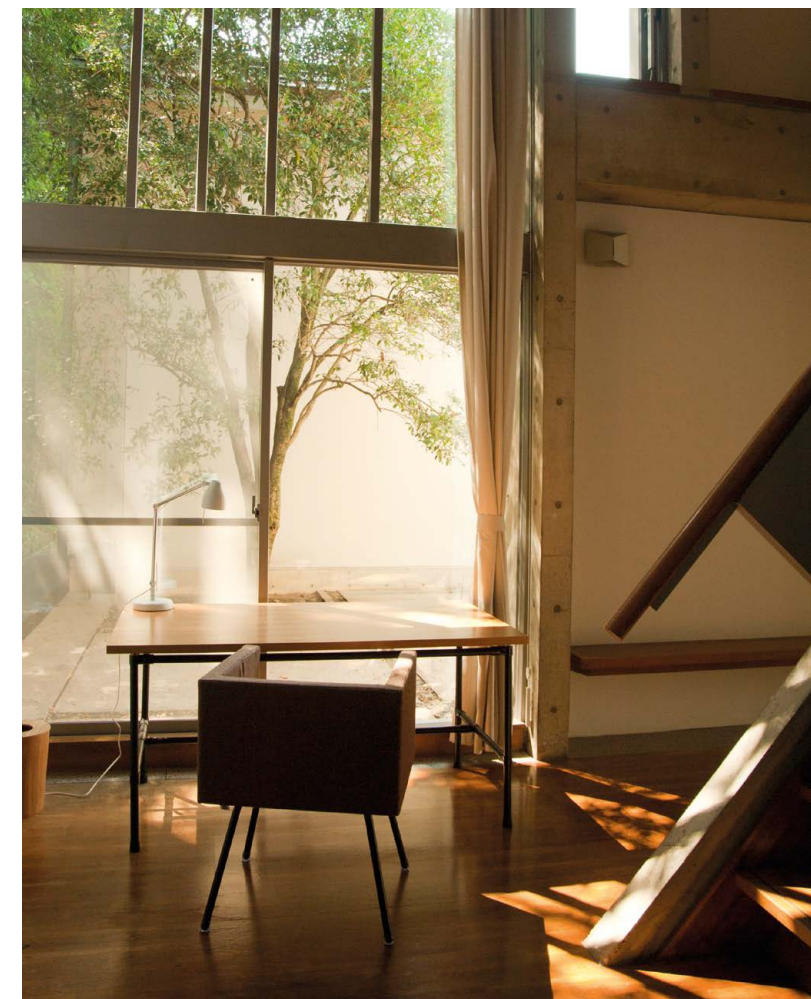
In 2014, the Foundation decided to become the primary patron of Villa Kujoyama in Kyoto, creating an opening for crafts residencies. Twelve years later, more than thirty craftspeople have had the opportunity to immerse themselves in Japanese culture. This promotes ties between the two countries and raises the profile of French craftsmanship in Asia.

The primary French cultural residence in Asia, Villa Kujoyama majestically overlooks the city of Kyoto – the cradle of all Japanese artistic practices since the 14th century. The mission of this place, first conceived of in 1926, is to be open to the world of art and local arts and crafts. The writer Paul Claudel, then the French ambassador to Japan, created the Franco-Japanese Cultural Institute. The mission of Villa Kujoyama, which was inaugurated in 1992, is to host residencies for artists and creators who would like to work on a project related to Japan. The Villa has now become one of the most prestigious of our international residences. It also drives much of the impact of the French presence in Japan and is a symbol of the fruitful dialogue between the two countries. Its mission is defined by its status. Villa Kujoyama is an artistic institution in the cultural cooperation network of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. It comes under the authority of the Institut français du Japon and operates in coordination with the Institut français.

A unique immersion in Japanese heritage and creation

The Foundation made its first commitment to Villa Kujoyama in 2014, participating in its renovation work and expanding the residency program to include French craftsmanship.

In twelve years, two hundred residents, including nearly thirty crafts residents, have spent four to six months there; over that same period, eight winners of the Liliane Bettencourt Prize pour l'Intelligence de la Main® were hosted for one month. They all had the opportunity to experience an exceptional immersion in Japanese culture by interacting with artists, teachers and the best craftspeople – living National Treasures with ancient know-how. The residents were able to learn about the heritage and also discover the modernity of Japanese arts and crafts and their ongoing dialogue with contemporary creation.



Entrance to Villa Kujoyama,
Lantern sculpture, José Lévy.
© Kenryou Gu (top)

Interior view of Villa Kujoyama.
© Arnaud Rodriguez (bottom right)

This patronage has regularly been reinvented over these twelve years to optimize the residencies' impact. The Foundation has implemented a tailor-made support program for the residents. It begins before the stay to provide some structure and continues afterward to help the craftspeople make the most of the experience – plans for an exhibition, contact with players in the artistic or industrial world, etc.

Innovative programs that inspire the other villas

Along the same lines, the Foundation was instrumental in developing individual five-year post-residencies to create an even more beneficial experience. Thirty craftspeople have already benefited, whether from an additional stay in Japan, financial support for a specific project, or the possibility of participating in events organized by the Villa to deepen ties with local sector actors. This post-residency support, which gives Villa Kujoyama its identity and makes it the model to emulate, is an important source of inspiration, in the context of the systematic thinking practiced by the Foundation.

The Foundation has also been involved in cultural events both on-site and outside of Villa Kujoyama. In 2024, the Villa celebrated the 10th anniversary of this groundbreaking patronage with a series of events, all hugely popular with a wide audience. More than 5,000 visitors attended these events and nearly 1,500 came to the *Thursdays at the Villa* series for exhibitions, conferences, and more.

A key commitment to research and innovation

The Foundation has renewed its commitment through 2031 and doubled the funds allocated. This support, developed with the teams from the Institut français du Japon, the Institut français and Villa Kujoyama, will make it possible to continue the residency programs and the stays for winners of the Liliane Bettencourt Prize pour l'Intelligence de la Main®. The Foundation will also help establish a creation support fund to finance post-residencies for craftspeople and all residents.

As part of this new support, the Foundation will give Villa Kujoyama the resources it needs to develop research grants with the goal of encouraging work that considers the major contemporary challenges shared by the two cultures: preservation and transmission of know-how; and a sustainable and responsible commitment, which is now more strategic than ever.

This will be achieved by developing partnerships with research laboratories at Japanese and French universities. Craftspeople will be in particularly high demand to participate in this drive for research and innovation.

2027 to 2031. The impact of the new support

→ **€3.1 million**, the total amount of support proposed, or about €600,000 per year. The previous support (2022-2026) was €300,000 to €400,000.

→ **15 research grants** awarded each year for innovative projects.

→ **13 residencies** of which 2 for crafts per year.

→ **10 to 20 post-residency projects** financed per year through the new support fund (Villa Kujoyama-Fondation Bettencourt Schueller Fund), or €90,000/year.



Dimitry Hlinka, designer, and **Nicolas Pinon**, lacquerer, Villa Kujoyama residents in 2024

“Villa Kujoyama is a gathering place as well as a place for focus and self-reflection.”

“We won the Liliane Bettencourt Prize pour l'Intelligence de la Main® in 2020 for *Entropie*, a radiator coated with plant lacquer whose color changes with the temperature. In 2024, we left for a residency at Villa Kujoyama to continue our research into plant lacquer. While there, we had the privilege of speaking with Kenji Toki, a researcher at Sendai University and a leading expert in Urushi lacquer. Used in Asia for nearly 10,000 years, this lacquer is made from the sap of the sumac tree. What makes it unusual is that it hardens on contact with air and heat. It is also waterproof, and was very widely used for tableware before the advent of plastic. Pigments

can be added to this ecological and sustainable material to obtain a wide range of colors. In our discussions with Kenji Toki, we learned about the innovative techniques that informed the design of the objects we showed at the *Révélations fair* in 2025. Having this time to focus on research was an invaluable help. We both head up a workshop and are constantly pressed for time. These residencies are an opportunity for a unique immersion in another culture, but also a place for focus and self-reflection that can spark a highly productive intellectual and creative energy.”

Villa Medici, the Showcase for Excellence in French Craftsmanship

The Foundation has been a patron of the French Academy in Rome since 2022 and decided to increase this support through 2028, notably to pursue the “Re-enchanting Villa Medici” project, which aims to refurbish six new historic rooms and nine Carlu pavilions for fellows. This is a way to continue the dialogue between craftspeople and architects and give French craftsmanship an unmatched global reach.

This is the oldest and one of the most prestigious French artist residences abroad. Villa Medici was founded in 1666 by Louis XIV and has been located since 1803 in a sumptuous Renaissance palace overlooking the city of Rome. Since its creation, it has hosted more than 2,000 fellows – Ingres, Berlioz, Debussy and, more recently, Jean-Michel Othoniel and Eva Jospin.

Led by its various directors, Villa Medici has also undergone numerous ambitious restorations. In the 19th century, Ingres had stone pines planted in the gardens and commissioned the bas-reliefs for the Bosco gallery. In the 1960s, Balthus decorated the walls with the famous patina that bears his name. Richard Peduzzi, who headed the Villa from 2002 to 2008, revamped the furnishings and designed the lighting.

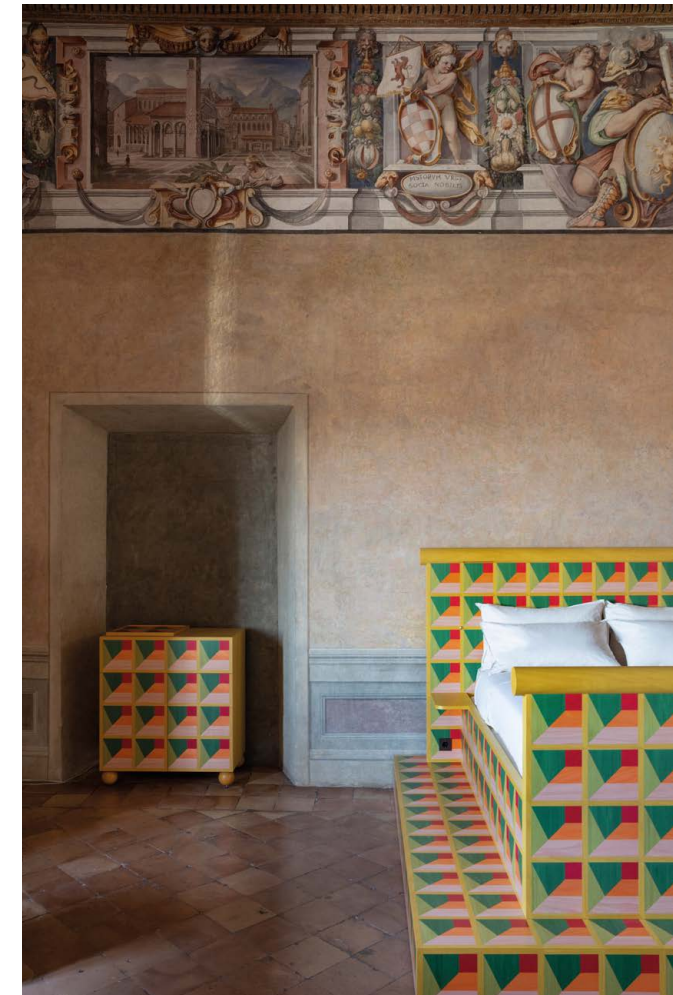
A place for innovation, creation and transmission

Sam Stourd e has been the Villa’s director since 2020 and wanted, in turn, to make his mark on the site with one mission: bring in contemporary artists and once again showcase exceptional French know-how. How could this mission not appeal to the Foundation? It became a patron of the Roman residence in 2022 with a two-fold objective: turn Villa Medici into a place for innovation, creation and transmission by fostering an interdisciplinary dialogue; and promote the creation and excellence of French craftsmanship. With these goals in mind, it helped Villa Medici welcome more craftspeople through dedicated residencies.

Sweeping view of Villa Medici.
© Daniele Molajoli (top)

“Camera Fantasia” designed by Studio GGSV with Matthieu Lemari e and Paper Factor, as part of the “Re-enchanting Villa Medici” project.
© Daniele Molajoli (bottom left)

The Debussy room refurbished by India Mahdavi as part of the “Re-enchanting Villa Medici” project.
© Daniele Molajoli (bottom right)



Relationships between craftspeople, designers and architects

Most importantly, it gave Sam Stourdzé the resources to be able to start work on the ambitious “Re-enchanting Villa Medici” project. This vast refurbishment campaign showcases contemporary design, craftsmanship and the restored heritage of Villa Medici, with the assistance of Manufactures Nationales. Since the program was launched in 2022, eighteen spaces have been fully renovated by teams of French and European architects, designers and crafts professionals, all coming together around a project that highlights superior know-how in an exceptional setting. The Foundation therefore made it possible for interior architect India Mahdavi, in close collaboration with selected craftspeople, to refurbish some of the historic rooms and salons. This was followed by the refurbishment of six guest rooms in the south wing by seven teams of interior architects and twelve French or Italian artisans. They benefited directly from this mission in terms of know-how development, reputation and revenues.

The Foundation also provides support for the Villa’s *Résidence Pro* educational program, to raise awareness of craftsmanship among students from vocational and agricultural high schools. This meant that 1,800 students from eighty-five high schools in three regions of France had the opportunity to spend a week in Rome to work on a project related to their own know-how and the Villa. The Foundation remains deeply committed to this type of support. It is mindful of the social component of this program, which is fully aligned with its philanthropic mission.

Projects in step with the challenges of innovation and ecology

Villa Medici has been an unequivocal success since 2022. With craftsmanship forming a larger part of its identity, it is positioned as a showcase for excellence in French craftsmanship for the general public and the cultural world.

The Foundation, which has a stake in this novel, inclusive and interdisciplinary approach, decided to renew its support through 2029 after discussions with Sam Stourdzé, his teams and the teams at Mobilier National involved in this program, in order to refine the project and make it even more ambitious. The goals are to refurbish and refurbish six more historic rooms, including the Turkish Room, and the nine Carlu pavilions for fellows; continue the crafts residency program, with Villa Medici hosting four craftspeople every year; and fund a group residency for a selection of winners of the Liliane Bettencourt Prize pour l’Intelligence de la Main® for one week every year.

This new phase of the project aims to expand the global reach of craftsmanship, making Villa Medici a European showcase for French artistry.

2025-2029. The impact of the new support

→ **€3.8 million**, the amount of support for Villa Medici through 2029, or €1.2 million per year. The previous support, from 2022 to 2025, was €1.5 million.

→ **6 rooms and 9 pavilions** for residents will be refurbished and redecorated.

→ **45 craftspeople and creators** hired.

→ **2 Résidences Pro** per year for students from vocational high schools.

→ **4 crafts residencies** per year.



Hugo Drubay, interior architect and craftsman,
Villa Medici resident in 2024

“The prestigious ‘Villa Medici’
label lends legitimacy to my know-how
and esthetics.”

“I am an interior architect and designer, but have also trained in ceramics and gold leaf gilding. Antiquity fascinates me and my creative process is inspired by objects, which I reinterpret by integrating new technologies and ecological considerations. I created my own workshop in 2017, and I design interiors where I seek to represent nature in design and in architecture. My proposal when I applied for the Villa Medici residency in 2024 was to reinterpret the Medici vase – that antique vase found by Ferdinando de’ Medici in the 16th century – by reimagining it with a contemporary esthetic. My residency lasted for a month, and

I met with historians and absorbed the spirit of the city and the gardens before modeling the vase using digital sculpture and 3D printing techniques. Visitors are meant to circle this sculpture, which was inspired by Greek temples and plant forms. It was made in the Staff & Espace & Volume workshops and has been installed in the Villa Medici gardens. This was an extraordinary experience from a creative standpoint, and also lent legitimacy to my know-how and esthetics. Since then I have secured another residency and a number of orders, mostly because of this prestigious label.”

The Foundation and Craftsmanship

A Groundbreaking Patron, An Unwavering Commitment

The Foundation, a philanthropic family foundation serving the common good, has become a key player in the crafts world, firm in its conviction. These professions underpin our culture, and also play an invaluable role in the vitality of contemporary creation. The Foundation is well aware of the prevailing cultural and societal challenges in this sector and pursues these philanthropic efforts by making the human factor the center of gravity and working alongside institutions and the public, craftspeople and entrepreneurs. Supporting these partners means giving them the human and financial resources they need to take long-term action by working for the common good with a focus on four key priorities.

Identify and support exceptional talent

In 1999, the Foundation created the Liliane Bettencourt Prize pour l'Intelligence de la Main® which has taken on the same challenge for more than two decades: highlight the dignity of craftsmanship, encourage innovation, and awaken vocations. Over the years, this award has honored 135 winners who represent more than fifty types of know-how. It is now a benchmark, a label of excellence that helps promote craftsmanship in France and abroad. Since 2014, the prize money has been supplemented by three years of financial and individual support to allow the winners to complete a development project. Lastly, the Foundation also works alongside the Les Lauréats de l'Intelligence de la Main® association to support craftspeople and create a talent community.

Promote craftsmanship abroad

Since 2014, the Foundation has chosen to support a selection of players who help promote these professions abroad. In particular, it funds the ambitious international projects of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs: artist residencies at Villa Kujoyama in Kyoto, Villa Albertine in the United States and Villa Medici in Rome.

In 2026, it is renewing all of its support and doubling the amounts allocated.

Foster interdisciplinarity, a sustainable and responsible commitment, and innovation

One of the major challenges for French craftsmanship is its ability to reinvent itself. That is why the Foundation sought to engage with institutions, such as Manufactures Nationales, the Lauréats de l'Intelligence de la Main® association and the Cité internationale de la tapisserie in Aubusson. The projects supported by these different players allow the sector to discover new sources of inspiration, grapple with new uses and new challenges (innovation, sustainable and responsible commitment), and adapt to economic constraints.

Contribute to the transmission of know-how

The key to the future of craftsmanship is raising awareness among the younger generations and developing more high-level training courses. With this in mind, the Foundation has designed tailor-made programs, such as the *Résidences Pro* at Villa Medici, building on its past experience with the Camondo school and Campus Versailles.

The Foundation in brief

- A philanthropic foundation serving the **common good**.
- A **groundbreaking, ambitious and enduring commitment**, to excellence.
- An **expert and unifying patron** of crafts.
- Encouragement for **creativity, research and interdisciplinarity**.

The commitment to craftsmanship by the numbers

- **€42.7 million** for crafts patronage since 1999.
- **135 winners** since the creation of the Liliane Bettencourt Prize pour l'Intelligence de la Main®.
- In 2026: nearly **€3.5 million** for craftsmanship.

Craftsperson working on a piece by André Fontes, Guillaume Lehoux and Ludwig Vogelgesang, winners of the Liliane Bettencourt Prize pour l'Intelligence de la Main®-Dialogues 2019. © Sophie Zénon (top)

Hands at work, porcelain maker Nadège Mouyssinat, winner of the Liliane Bettencourt Prize pour l'Intelligence de la Main®-Talents d'exception 2024. © Julie Limont (bottom)



The Fondation Bettencourt Schueller

Taking talent to the top

The Fondation Bettencourt Schueller is both a family foundation and, since its creation in 1987, a public-interest charitable organization. It aims to “take talent to the top” to contribute to France’s success and influence.

To do so, it seeks out, selects, supports and promotes the men and women who are today imagining the world of tomorrow, in three areas that make concrete contributions to the common good: life sciences, the arts and solidarity. Reflecting its philanthropic philosophy, the Foundation acts through awards, donations, personalized support, positive communication and co-constructed initiatives. Since its creation, the Foundation has awarded prizes to 676 winners and supported more than 1,400 projects led by talented individuals, teams, associations, and organizations.

The Foundation and craftsmanship

It lies at the heart of our heritage but is never stuck in the past. Throughout its history, French craftsmanship has been a valuable tool for the vitality and future of creation. Backed by this conviction, the Foundation decided in 1999 to support this exceptional craftsmanship by creating the Liliane Bettencourt Prize pour l’Intelligence de la Main®.

Along with this Prize, the Foundation continues this groundbreaking patronage with an ambitious policy of donating to many institutions, both in France and abroad. This is a structured commitment designed for the long term, one that plays an indisputable role in the prestige and revival of French craftsmanship.

www.fondationbs.org

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