

made in France



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When we opened Demisch Danant in 2005, our mission was to curate exhibitions about French design from the 1950s through the 1970s, and to share the stories and personal narratives associated with these works. The opening of our New York gallery was preceded by years of research in the field: examining period magazines, studying objects and works, attributing work to creators, and investigating provenance. This dedication to research continues today and remains a cornerstone of our approach.

made in France is an exhibition that traces our experience of discovering and reintroducing designers from the post-war period and bringing to light the importance of their contributions. This process has confirmed our belief that the best design and art remain relevant throughout the decades;

other work comes and goes, depending on the “tendance.” Not every trail we have followed has proven to be significant, but many of our interests and finds have gained the wider recognition they deserve, having been embraced by the design community, collectors, institutions and the public at large.

For the opening exhibition of our newest gallery space, we present a selection of new stories—works by designers we believe merit more investigation, along with lesser-known pieces by well-established designers we have represented since our beginnings. In most cases, the research behind these selections began several years ago, and the opening of our new space seems the perfect moment to showcase our discoveries.

To accompany this exhibition, we’ve chosen to highlight a selection of works and designers whose stories best exemplify the path we’ve been on, and will continue to drive us in our programming and research in this—our newest chapter.

Pierre Paulin

Conceived for his landmark commission for the Élysée Palace in 1972, Pierre Paulin's *Élysée* sofas and chairs are some of the most recognizable and prized designs of the 1970s. Yet up until ten years ago, these pieces — along with other furniture and lighting Paulin created for this interior at the invitation of the Mobilier National — were virtually unknown. While Paulin had long been considered one of the important designers of the 20th century, he was known primarily for his work for Artifort, based in the Netherlands. In general, his French production, and the works associated, had not received attention from the market nor the design community.

When we opened our gallery's first location in 2005 with *Utopia and Reality*, an exhibition showcasing important French design, a suite of Paulin's *Élysée* series (originally from the Nanterre Préfecture) was a highlight. Paulin was generally known, but this model was new to many and the response was vivid. As a result of *Utopia and Reality*, demand for the suite's elegant shape and important historical associations grew quickly, as did their value.

Paulin also designed lighting, produced by Verre Lumiere, and other furniture designs for the Palace rooms. His *Rosace Table* (1971) was never produced at the time for commercial distribution, and is thus a coveted piece from the collection. While the sconces Paulin created for the Smoking Room were produced, their production was in smaller numbers than some of his other lighting, and thus are very rare.

Shortly after this exhibition, we met Maia Paulin and then Pierre, and subsequently participated in a series of key exhibitions and projects that highlighted Paulin's career: *Pierre Paulin: Superdesigner*, Villa Noailles, Hyères (2007); *Pierre Paulin: Supermoderne*, Grand-Hornu, Belgium (2008); *Pierre Paulin: Le Design au pouvoir*, Mobilier National,





Galerie des Gobelins; and monograph *Pierre Paulin, Designer* by Catherine Geel (2009). Now, as the attention to Paulin's work intensifies again, including his 2016 retrospective at Centre Pompidou, other series and commissions come into clearer focus.

For example, the *Pacha Chair* (1975) was briefly produced by Mobilier International, but then overlooked, mainly because production was relatively small and examples rare to find. However, the *Pacha* not only embodies Paulin's signature technique of soft structures but also has an appeal reminiscent of the market's early interest in the *Élysée Chair* (1972), and is poised to achieve similar iconic status.

Also significant is the designer's work in the 1980s following the commissions for President Mitterand and Paris Mayor Jacques Chirac. During this period Paulin created some of the most personal designs of his career, making objects for himself rather than for commercial production. Among these are the *Cathedral Table* (1981); *Bonheur-du-Jour Desk* (1982); and *Chaise à Palmette* (1981).



Maria Pergay

We first came across the work of Maria Pergay in the late 1990s, in the days when the 1970s were just beginning to be explored by French dealers. The moment was an exciting time for us. Everyone sensed something was happening, but a lot of work had to be done to understand what constituted the “best” in design from a period until now relatively unexplored. There were very few books, or existing scholarship on the decade, so extensive primary research was required to make attributions and identify pieces. Some of the designers were still living and accessible in France, so there was an opportunity to meet and speak with them firsthand.

After some creative investigatory effort, we located Maria Pergay in 2004, living at the time away from France, in Essaouira, Morocco. This encounter led to the publication of the first monograph on the designer and her works, written by Suzanne. Suzanne traveled to Morocco for a week to interview Maria for the book, a visit that generated our collaboration to produce and exhibit her contemporary designs. In 2010, we co-authored the catalogue raisonné for Pergay’s work, *Maria Pergay: Complete Works, 1957-2010*.

We bought our first Pergay *Ring Chair* (1968) in 2001, and acquired a *Flying Carpet Daybed* (1968) in 2004. Both of these designs have become iconic in Pergay’s canon.

We were fortunate to present the *Barbarella* (1970), a vanity shaped like a compact, at the 2004 International Art + Design Fair at New York’s Park Ave Armory. Little did we know at the time, this piece would be the only example we would ever come across. The *Dining Table* (1968), with its stainless-steel top and Plexiglas base, is another seminal work that exemplified Pergay’s signature use of oval forms and her mastery of proportion.





Many other works by Pergay are equally central to her aesthetic and show her prescient ability to produce works in the moment, that over time, offer increasing resonance and relevance. Examples include the *Wave Desk* (1968); the *Table Eventail* (1968); and the more recent *Drape Cabinets* (2005).

Although Pergay is now internationally known as a seminal figure of 20th century design, some extraordinary aspects of her work still remain underappreciated. She is truly one of the great designers of the post-war era. Similar to how Eileen Gray wasn't discovered until the end of her career, we believe enthusiasm for Pergay's work will continue to build.

Key moments in the designer's recent career include our 2012 exhibition *Maria Pergay: Place des Vosges*, in which new work was presented alongside five decades of Pergay's creations. Curated by the designer herself, we hosted the exhibition in a 17th century townhouse on Place des Vosges, the location of Pergay's first public gallery more than fifty years prior.



Artists Making Furniture

The period between the late 1960s and mid-1970s witnessed the emergence of a new era of design and artistic expression in France. It was an exciting moment, marked by leaps of creative daring in every field, and rich with an eagerness to experience different mediums and forms of expression beyond the old accepted boundaries. Artists and industrial designers formed collectives like Atelier A, reflecting a new social context characterized by experimentation. In their work, they challenged the definitions of modern design by incorporating new materials, humor and spirit into the creation of objects that were necessary to daily life.

Les Lalannes

Just ten years ago, the work of Claude and François-Xavier Lalanne was little known outside of the most knowledgeable design circles in France. The couple's wonderfully eccentric creations did not yet attract the international acclaim and market traction they enjoy today, especially in the United States.

Before opening our gallery, we had been sourcing Lalanne pieces that we found "under the radar," including a *Marble Bird* (1974), several sets of bronze-and-wool sheep, a *Donkey Bar* (1973) and a *Camel* (1970), which we presented in our first exhibition *Utopia and Reality* in 2005. We sold these objects for prices well below \$75,000 – a significant figure at the time for Lalanne. The *Camel* was deaccessioned from an important North Carolina collection and, incredibly, no one wanted it. There was no telling how the market would change: Sotheby's December 2005 *Colonial Williamsburg* sale began a domino effect for the Lalannes that is still in effect today. We were quickly priced out of the market, but still remember the excitement of those early days.



Guy de Rougemont

Guy de Rougemont's *Table Nuage (Cloud Table)* was commissioned by legendary decorator Henri Samuel in 1971 and produced in a small edition with variations in Plexiglas and metal. It was the centerpiece of the living room in Samuel's own Paris apartment, a famous interior that is still referenced today by decorators and design fans for its elegant and visionary combination of contemporary works and antiquities.

The *Table Nuage* (1971) has become coveted by collectors as emblematic of the French 1970s and the Henri Samuel legend. We first exhibited an original model at the 2004 International Art + Design Fair. Since then, the *Table Nuage* from the 1970s has been increasingly difficult to find. In 2006, Rougemont re-editioned this design with Galerie Passebon; it is this edition that we exhibited in our fall 2014 exhibition *Paris Match: Henri Samuel and the Artists He Commissioned, 1968-1977*.



César

French sculptor César Baldaccini, universally known as César, had achieved acclaim for his truly radical approach to sculpture in the years following World War II and was a member of the French Nouveaux Réalistes as well as Atelier A.

César was also in Henri Samuel's orbit and in the late 1970s César created several functional sculptures for Samuel and others, following his work in *Expansions*. These pieces, although rarely seen, quint-essentially characterize Parisian 1970s style where design and art mingled in a uniquely French approach to interiors.

For many years we had followed César's *Expansion Lamp* (1976), a piece rarely seen on the market, and a work that remains one of Suzanne's favorite lamps. In early 2014, we were introduced to Stephanie Busuttill-Janssen, president of the César Foundation, and had the opportunity to not only exhibit an *Expansion Lamp*, but also a rare *Expansion Table* (1977) and several other key César works. Later that year, we curated the exhibition *Paris Match: Henri Samuel and the Artists He Commissioned, 1968-1977*.

A spark was ignited, and although César made very furniture works, our interest has expanded into his sculptures, drawings and collages from the 1960s and 1970s.



French 1950s and 1960s

Stephane's interest in the untold stories of the French 1950s was ignited by Patrick Favardin's seminal book, *Les Décorateurs des années 50* (2002), and a collection of period *Meuble et Décor* volumes we bought from a retiring Belgian dealer. Deeply inspired, Stephane went on to acquire more archival documentation, delving into the mindsets of a group of young architects who shaped French design in the 1950s and 1960s.

In 2006, he co-curated an auction sale of René-Jean Caillette's estate and through this event met Roger Fatus, Joseph-André Motte and Dirk Jan Rol, key designers of this period. In 2010, the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris presented *Mobiboom: L'Explosion du design en France 1945-1975* which catalyzed greater appreciation for

the contributions these designers had made to French design history. Stephane's research and curatorial work established him as a leading expert in a new area of interest.

Following the reconstruction period, designers embraced mass production as well as newer, affordable industrial materials as a means of realizing radically inventive forms. While they were true pioneers, their contributions to French design and architectural history went largely unnoticed. We set out to change this.

Antoine Philippon and Jacqueline Lecoq

Stephane met Jacqueline Lecoq at the opening of *Mobiboom*, after several years of exchanging emails and phone calls about her work with Philippon. Antoine Philippon and Jacqueline Lecoq were among a group of young architects who changed the face of French furniture production in the 1950s and 1960s. Inspired by the teachings of the Modernist masters of the Union des Artistes Modernes (U.A.M.), they sought to bring harmony and comfort to interiors, employing modern materials and techniques to improve the daily life of French citizens in the challenging post-war climate.

Philippon and Lecoq's furniture combines minimalism with a pervasive sense of architectural refinement and elegance. The couple approached interiors with an almost puritanical sense of functionalism, yet succeeded in creating extremely efficient environments that were still comfortable, accessible and human.

In 2007, we presented the duo's *Desk* (1960), a quintessential embodiment of Philippon and Lecoq's aesthetic — pure in form, architectural and elegant in proportions. We discovered the duo's *Diamond Door* series (1962) next, and presented them in a solo show of their furniture in 2011. A monograph authored by Stephane Danant accompanied that exhibition.



Joseph-André Motte

Joseph-André Motte was part of the same younger generation as Philippon and Lecoq. With a brilliant career marked by prestigious public commissions (including the Orly and Roissy airports, the Musée du Louvre, and the Préfecture du Val d'Oise), Motte is one of the most influential and innovative figures of the post-war French design.

We presented our first solo show on Motte in 2011 at Design Miami/Basel with an overview of his career from the 1950s through the 1960s, including the now iconic *Tripod Chair* (1949). That exhibition was followed by our 2012 exhibition *Art of Living*, in which we presented a continuum of Motte's work drawn from the 1950s to 1960s.

Stephane met Motte in 2006 and waited seven years to have access to his archives. For the last three years, Stephane has been solely cataloguing the archives from Motte's estate in research for a monograph on Motte's career. Our new discoveries regarding Motte's legacy have been remarkable. Motte was an astute record keeper and kept every drawing and letter, chronicling his processes, relationships with other designers and figures in the industry, and providing us with insight into the spirit of the post-war era. We continue to be surprised by the extent of innovation and creativity that has emerged from our exploration of this designer's archive.



New Discoveries

Reflecting back on the beginnings of the gallery and our past exhibitions we realize we have stayed true to our original intentions, and in fact, continue to deepen our commitment to post-war French design and the designers we represent.

We continue to explore this period with the same vigor as when we started in the 1990s, making discoveries that excite us personally and professionally. As we look to our future, we continue to explore and integrate into our exhibition program works by artists and designers who provided their own unique contributions during this seminal period.

Sheila Hicks

Sheila Hicks' work first came to our attention in 2010, just before her seminal retrospective exhibition at the ICA Philadelphia when Suzanne had the opportunity to work with her on an architectural commission. We became good friends and continued to develop more of these works together, a process that has brought many hours of enlightening discussions about color, texture and architecture. Meanwhile, we also began to explore Hicks' historical work in earnest, slowly understanding the many layers of her vision and diverse and unconventional practice. We were pleasantly surprised to discover that Hicks is connected to so many of the designers of the 1960s and 1970s we represent, which makes sense, given she has lived and worked in Paris since 1964.

We were particularly interested to learn of Hicks' extensive interest in architecture, both the inspiration she draws from it and her collaboration with architects. These collaborations have resulted in site-specific works that showcase her ability to reform space by inserting soft and pliable planes into the structural vocabulary of the architecture itself. Through such large-scale pieces, Hicks has sought to transform space into a humanistic experience rich with tactility and color. Hicks continues to explore how textiles communicate with, complement and rely on issues of materiality, construction and scale.

We acquired our first Hicks work in 2012 — a *Prayer Rug* commissioned by Elie de Rothschild in 1969 for his private collection. The piece was conceived at the same time Hicks created an architectural installation for the Rothschild Bank in Paris (an interiors project by designer Michel Boyer). In 2014, we presented *Textured Planes*, an exhibition investigating how three creators, Hicks included, used textiles as a means of architectural intervention. That same year, we presented

Sheila Hicks' work *Séance*, a large-scale, site-specific intervention at Design Miami/Basel, in the new Herzog & de Meuron designed Messe building. This installation featured fiber made from pure pigment, inviting visitors to dialogue directly with Hicks' color play, one of the most fundamental aspects of her process.

Since then, we continue work on architectural projects with Hicks, including the development of a series of rugs, and present historical and architectural works by the artist, as part of our larger gallery dialogue regarding the intersections between design, art and architecture.



Installation View. Sheila Hick's *Séance*, Design Miami/Basel, 2014

Etienne Fermigier

Stephane starting noticing the works of Etienne Fermigier in magazines around 2000 and came across some of his lamps shortly thereafter in the market which were unattributed. That was the beginning of our interest in Fermigier.

There has been very little information about Fermigier available, largely because he died young and his published body of work was limited, but it has become clear to us that Fermigier provides a legacy of unrivaled radical minimalism for the period. Since our first queries, we have discovered his connections with Meubles et Fonction, a pioneering and prominent Parisian design showroom in the 1960s and 1970s, and with other key designers of the period. Such collaborations put Fermigier in the forefront of this era of French design.

It has taken Stephane years to accumulate works by the designer, as well as information on their provenance and design. The process of discovery has been like building a puzzle, acquiring information bit by bit, before the wider implications of Fermigier's legacy emerge.

In 2012, Stephane started weekly visits to Fermigier's widow, Franette Guerin, to better understand the central tenet behind the designer's work. Through this and privileged access to Fermigier's personal archives, Stephane has gained an insightful understanding of Fermigier's point of view about minimalism's inherent elegance, and the designer's skill in proportion and dedication to exposed technical construction being the sole decorative element emphasized. The more we have uncovered, the more we are confident there is something worth sharing.



Etienne Fermigier, *Desk Lamp*, 1971

Verre Lumiere

Verre Lumiere, a French lighting studio founded in 1968, produced lighting by some of the best French designers of the period including Pierre Paulin, Joseph-André Motte, Jean-Pierre Vitrac, Ben Swildens, Etienne Fermigier and Sabine Charoy. Until recently, we were largely focused on the lamps by designers that we knew — like the *Élysée Lamps* by Pierre Paulin (1971) and *Flower Lamp* (1970) by Jean-Pierre Vitrac — not quite understanding the magnitude and influence of the firm itself.

At the end of 2015, Stephane sought out Sabine Charoy, the creative director of the firm in the 1970s. Charoy recounted stories how over lunch the designers would sketch design on napkins, which would be turned into prototypes by the end of the day.

For the first time, we are exhibiting lamps that the studio produced throughout its history en masse — and the realizations in seeing the lamps as a complete body of work are remarkable. Suddenly we are able to understand the unique design vision behind Verre Lumiere and its stable of designers, and the extraordinary quality and technical ingenuity of their production stand out.



Sabine Charoy, *Table Lamp*, 1969

One of the most exciting aspects of our work is the evolving knowledge that comes with continuing research and building connoisseurship in these areas. It's that thrilling moment when suddenly the dots are connected.

Sometimes our curiosity is peaked by one object, which then leads to a whole scope of cascading discoveries. Other times, its finding unexpected connections between artists and designers and the works they produced.

Every piece has a story — and just because it's not yet known, it doesn't mean there isn't one. This discovery process, and the time and patience it takes, is work we enjoy sharing through our gallery exhibitions and publications like this. We look forward to continuing the conversation in the months and years ahead.

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