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Design Dealers: Pascal Cuisinier, Galerie Pascal Cuisinier

BY JANA PERKOVIC | JUNE 11, 2015



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Pascal Cuisinier
(Courtesy of Galerie Pascal Cuisinier)

An architect by training, Pascal Cuisinier opened his first stand at the Puces de Saint-Ouen antiques market in 1994 specializing in decorative arts from the 1930s and 1940s. After a masters degree in Visual Art and Aesthetics, and a doctoral thesis in the Philosophy of Art, Cuisinier returned to Puces de St Ouen in 2006 opening a stand in the Paul Bert market to promote the generation of French designers born between 1925 and 1929, "the first modern French designers." Their works were practical, well-designed and produced in small quantities to very high standards of quality. Pascal Cuisinier is now acknowledged as one of the top experts on this distinct generation of designers and his gallery is regularly visited by numerous collectors.

Name: Pascal Cuisinier



Age: 46

Hails from: France, Saint Germain en Laye

Founder and owner of: Galerie Pascal Cuisinier

Gallery's Specialty: The First French designers

Designers represented: Pierre Guariche, Pierre Paulin, Joseph André Motte, Jacques

Biny, Michel Buffet, Louis Baillon, Jean Boris Lacroix, Dirk Jan Rol & Jeanine Abraham, Geneviève Dangles et Christian Defrance, Alain Richard, Robert Mathieu, Michel Mortier, André Monpoix, René Jean Caillette, Pierre Disderot, Antoine Philippon, Jacqueline Lecoq.

What drew you to design?

It is a mix of the two areas in my educational background, architecture and philosophy of art. Design is a perfect and contemporary example that art is not situated only in a painting and that, without a doubt, art can be found in all manmade objects.

Was it a product that you saw that impressed you?

Not exactly a product of design, but a piece of art. The first piece entirely immaterial sold to an important institution called "Good feelings in good times" by Roman Ondak. It is a performance work, of people standing in a queue for nothing in particular, which usually takes place in a museum. It's very intelligent. The work isn't an object, but a pure principle. This seems to me extremely contemporary.

Do you remember the first time you realized you wanted to work in design?

Twenty years ago, during a family Christmas, I came across a beautiful sideboard in an antique dealer's close to where my mother lives — but I didn't know the designer. I fell in love with it, so much so that my mother offered to buy it for me. It turned out I had discovered the work of the excellent French designers of the 1950s, André Monpoix. It was his work that opened up for me the world of his generation. Today, in my gallery I promote the work of these designers, helping others discover their careers, their intelligence, the beauty of their designs, and their importance in the history of the French decorative arts.

I still live with this sideboard, and I couldn't find it better. In fact, today I live in an apartment that was completely conceived in 1953 by André Monpoix.

When did you found your gallery, and with what vision?

In 2006, after my second stage of studies in Art Philosophy, I wanted to promote this generation of designers that had remained unknown until then, and show their importance for the history of decorative arts in France. I thus re-opened a gallery to show their work and make them known to the public, so that they could finally get the recognition they deserved.

What was the greatest challenge in the first years of the gallery? What would you do differently today?

The challenge at the beginning was to gather all the documentation needed to authenticate and identify the models, and reconstruct their history. It was difficult to source the most important pieces and set up exhibitions that were representative of a designer's whole body of work. These pieces were highly innovative and radical in France when they were created and haven't been re-sold a lot. They are very difficult to find nowadays. An exhibition requires about eight years of sourcing and research.

Do you still remember your first big success?

At the time I was a very young French Art Deco dealer and I was participating for the very first time in a fair. I borrowed the money from the bank to make it possible, and I still remember how worried I was.

I sold everything on the opening day. I spent the rest of the fair telling to the people that everything was sold already.

What project are you particularly proud of?

My first monographic exhibition. It was dedicated to Pierre Guariche's lighting works. It involved gathering together almost all of his designs, after eight years of collecting. Today it would be impossible to do the same thing — most of the pieces are impossible to find.

I am also very proud, because today they have become highly sought after and their price has tripled. I hope it will be the same story for Jacques Biny's lights that we are exhibiting this year at Design Miami/ Basel, as they are fantastic works of design.

How do you choose whether or not to represent a designer? What criteria influence your decision?

I won't give you all my secrets! But seriously, in my area it is quite easy because this generation of creators is historically defined. They have to be treated as a whole, and I cannot add or remove any.

Where is the design market at today?

I am very surprised that certain contemporary designers are revisiting traditional materials or a baroque aesthetic, while at the same time there is a wave of stimulating and truly forward-

thinking design. Today, new design processes are constantly being invented through machines and computers. One day we will be able to buy an algorithm on the Web and print any kind of furniture or object at home. New, incredible materials are emerging, such as luminous fabrics, innovative ceramics, and new lighting technology. There are new research fields around the idea of sustainability and eco-responsibility, new recyclable materials, or initiatives that experiment in participatory design to improve the living conditions of certain populations. It is an exciting time.

However, I have the feeling that, while a lot of these things are happening, they remain invisible on the market. What I am observing is that the innovative design that makes it onto the market today seems to me a little bit "bourgeois." In my opinion, intelligence is the real luxury.

How has the market changed since you've entered the business?

In my area of specialization the market is healthy and constantly evolving. I am working to develop a new emerging market that was forgotten for a while. The collectors, my clients, are re-discovering designers of high quality and their excellent designers. The market is thus exploding, and the prices are constantly rising. This makes the market more and more attractive for new investors and collectors. However, there is a downside to this success: copies and false attributions. We spend a lot of time and energy removing them from the market.

Re-editions are also a very contemporary phenomenon. In the past, we use to call it "copy of old" but it was commonly known that a chest of drawers bought in 1920 was a fake inspired by the 18th century style. Re-editions today are trying to create the illusion of authenticity. For some people, it could be an obstacle for the growth in value for the original piece.

What was the last piece of design that thoroughly impressed you? Why?

A naturally filtered outdoor swimming pool in London, conceived by the very talented agency Ooze architects. It is called "Of Soil and Water."

This temporary swimming pool, built on a construction site, is filtered by using wetland flora. It is a creation between art and architecture, very intelligent and innovative, sustainable and participative. These are very contemporary issues.

What do you think will be the next big thing in design?

3D printing prefigures has very stimulating application possibilities.

...and what trend would you like to see disappear?

Shiny design

What qualities must a good gallerist possess?

He or she should promote good designers whilst being rigorous, multi-skilled and available!

And what should a good gallerist never do?

Be seduced by ease.

If you could live in any other historical era, which one would you choose?

In the future, I guess. I am of a very curious nature.

If you could have a drink with a historical figure, who would it be, and what would you talk about?

I would love to meet Alfred Deller, who was probably the most beautiful voice in the world. Just to listen to him.

If the constrictions of ordinary existence were not a problem, what one work of design would you love to own?

Personally, I don't particularly need to possess objects.

"If I weren't a gallerist, I'd probably be..."

Surely an artist

“Design is...”

...the new allographic functioning way of decorative arts: the piece is not defined by an object, but by a set of defining features that make it repeatable. This is the definition from the American analytical philosophy that is, according to me, the most relevant today.

For more of Pascal Cuisinier's gallery, click on the slideshow. (<http://enfr.blouinartinfo.com/photo-galleries/design-dealers-pascal-cuisinier-galerie-pascal-cuisinier>)

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