

LAFFANOUR GALERIE DOWNTOWN/PARIS

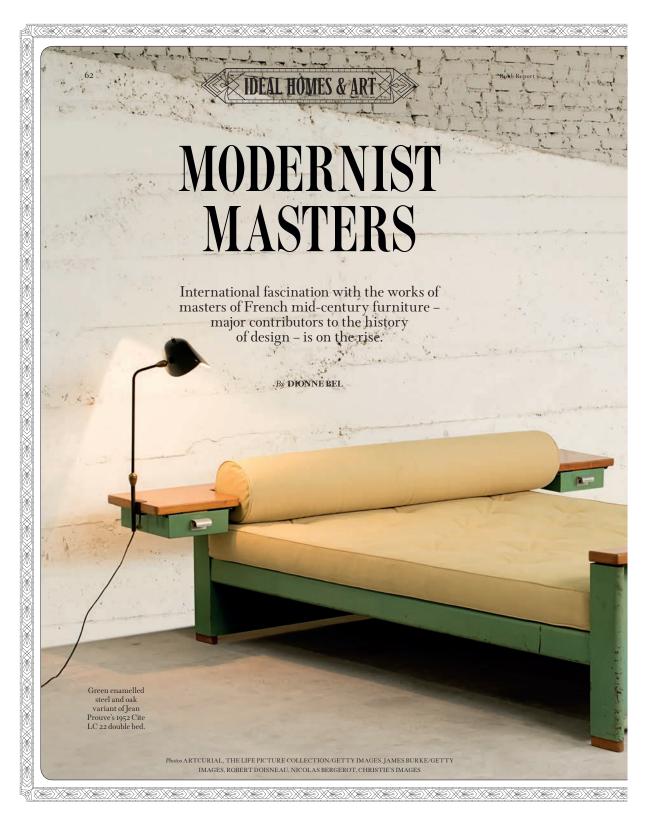
février 2017

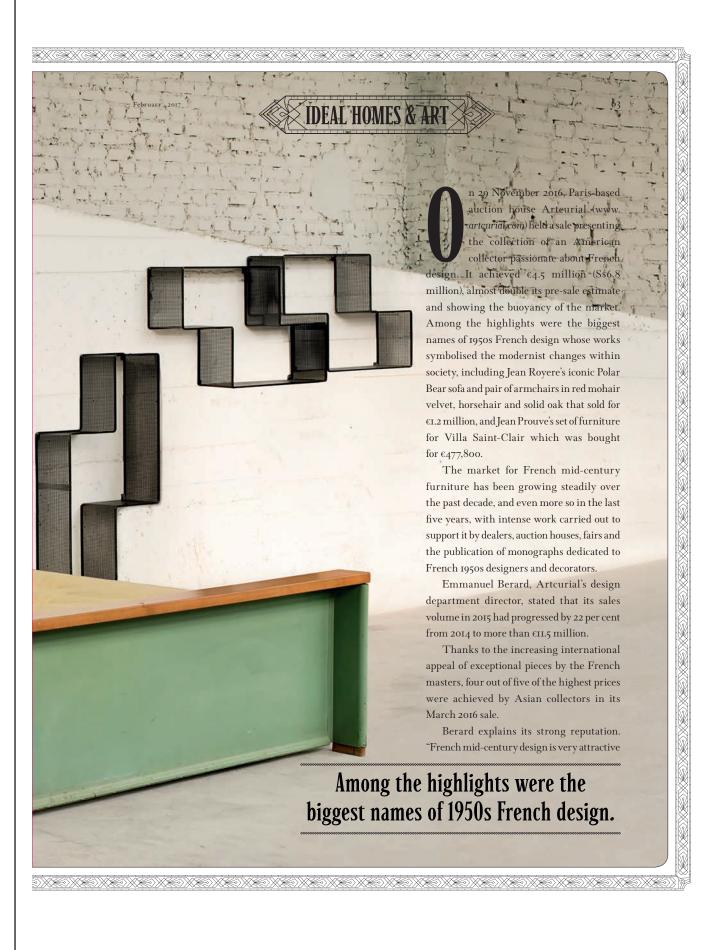
ROBB REPORT (Singapour)

pages 62 à 67

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for international collectors because of its wide range of styles, types and authors. This period is the meeting point of many contemporary concerns: post-war reconstruction, use of new materials (like Prouve with metal) and a better-living-through-design ideology that drove all these designers. From the traditional Western clientele of collectors, we saw the birth three years ago of a new generation of collectors from Asia (mainly China, South Korea and Japan).

"This new competition has made prices rise by at least 30 per cent."

Sales at Design Miami last December were high and widespread, ranging from



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contemporary furniture by emerging designers to rare vintage works with illustrious provenance.

At the fair, Paris-based Laffanour/Galerie Downtown (www.galeriedowntown.com) presented a selection created by Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret for Chandigarh in India, the first time it devoted an entire exhibition to this furniture in the US.

Gallery director, Helin Serre, comments: "The rise in popularity of 1950s French design comes from several factors, starting with the fact



Le Corbusier (inset) created this Les Musiciennes I tapestry (top) in 1953.

that it is marketed and supported by merchants and relayed by collectors or institutions that have turned it into iconic furniture. Add to this the transformation that has taken place these last 30 years in the fields of fashion, contemporary art or interior decoration, where it is presented as icons of the 20th century. The actions of these various sectors allowed its development in a different way: commercial, decorative, intellectual."

With its avant-garde spirit and aesthetic based on functionality and







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about the synergy between French midcentury design and contemporary art, as the boundaries between them become less defined. He regularly collaborates with contemporary art galleries, where they organise exhibitions in each other's spaces to stimulate demand and demonstrate how collectors can mix French mid-century design and contemporary art in their homes.

Serre says: "What contemporary art collectors have mostly retained about 1950s design is the simplicity of materials, the minimalism of forms and the aesthetic appearance within the space it is re-employed. In numerous collections, it is often shown beside a Warhol, Basquiat, Richter or even a Thomas Struth, which quickly raised it to a level that we didn't expect 30 years ago!"

New York City-based 1950
Gallery (www.g1950.com) met
with strong response for works by
Prouve, Perriand and Jeanneret at
Design Miami 2016. Founder Alberto
Aquilino notes: "The French post-war

design market has existed for more than 30 years. It was created in the early '80s when a handful of merchants, such as Francois Laffanour and Philippe Jousse, began to introduce pieces that had been until then rarely exhibited. They showed how this minimal 1950s furniture – linked for the most part to architecture – could be compared with contemporary art. So they entered the domain of major contemporary art collectors of the '80s and '90s, which allowed its development. Additionally, for more than 30 years, there has regularly been a new generation of collectors."

At the Christie's Paris (www.christies. com) May 2016 sale, Royere's rare straw marquetry sideboard achieved €373,500, while Perriand's colourful platform bookshelf specially commissioned around 1954 by an architecture model maker known simply as Harang, achieved €361,500.

Pauline de Smedt, design department director of Christie's Paris, says: "The French '50s have a

From above: chairs by Jean Prouve made of bent steel and moulded plywood, circa 1950; Charlotte Perriand.



strong historical inheritance: there has always been in France a long tradition with the decorative arts, sophistication and high-quality craftsmanship, which goes back to the 18th century."

What's exceptional about this category of design is that the works promote aesthetic values that are still at the heart of contemporary lifestyles.

De Smedt says: "French mid-century furniture combines very well with contemporary furniture because it has the same consideration for practicality and sober Perriand's 1954 bookshelf was sold for €361,500, well over its estimate of €200,000 to €300,000, by Christie's in May last year. sophistication in colour, form and materials – plastic, resin, metal and wood – which perfectly coincide with today's lifestyles and match the aesthetic of contemporary artworks and collectors."

Berard concludes: "Some architects are able to match perfectly French midcentury design with contemporary interiors, for example Joseph Dirand or Delphine

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Krakoff. French midcentury design pieces can be considered the 20th century's new classics and, as classics, they match very well with many things!"

