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Art Deco Furniture Designs That Jazzed Up an Age

In terms of art, one of the more decadent sights in New York right now is at the Metropolitan Museum of Art: a large gallery devoted to French Art Deco furnishings from the museum's design collection. Passing through the array can make victims of gray line script, diamond-shaped cigarette holders and Josephine Baker dance to your head. Swearing, anyone?

The selection has been arranged by Janet Cox, an associate curator at the museum's department of 19th-century, modern and contemporary art. Its nearly 100 objects — about 75 percent of the Met's French Art Deco collection — is the most it has ever exhibited at one time.

It includes a silver coffee and tea service by Jean E. Prouvé (circa 1925), whose simple geometric designs create such complex reflections that you may miss the service's substantial legs until you're sitting. Also on view are the handsomely thick, simple glass vases and perfume bottles by Henri Navarre, their forms buoyed by masses of tiny air bubbles, expertly trapped and contained.

Above all there are several examples of the practice, generally veneered desks and cabinets designed up by the incomparable Jacques-Émile Ruhlmann. Their exquisite but/or rosewood legs taper to ivory columns at delicate and sexy as the white accents of a well-trod horse. Ruhlmann, Art Deco's greatest artist, is also the subject of a gallery exhibition on the Upper East Side.

Art Deco blossomed in France in the years after World War I. It helped the 1920s rise on both sides of the Atlantic and left an indelible mark on American skyscrapers, most iconically perhaps on the Chrysler Building. The craze for Deco was also evident in New York department

stores, which mounted exhibitions of French examples and

"Masterpieces of French Art Deco" at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, (212) 345-7730. "Jacques-Émile Ruhlmann," through Jan. 1 at Friedman Vallois gallery, 27 East 67th Street, Manhattan, (212) 307-3000; vdllois.com.

also produced cheaper knockoffs, replicating exotic veneers, shark skin and ivory with simple painted wood. (Cobble horror?) Nonetheless, Art Deco morphed into a popular, industrial "streamlined style" of relatively coarse metal alloys that attracted everything from trains and planes to refrigerators and radios.

Art Deco took its name from the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes held in Paris in 1925, which spurred the style's global spread, foremost to America, and beyond. It was in a sense the first international style to originate in the 20th century, at least until that phrase became associated with the decidedly un-Deco, more Bauhaus-based architecture and design advocated by the Museum of Modern Art.

Art Deco and Bauhaus are typically opposed, making the coincidence of the Met's Deco exhibition and the Museum's current

**Taking Old French
craft traditions
into the '20s.**

exhibition extension especially curious. But the two styles actually share some gray areas. For example, books on Art Deco sometimes include examples of tubular steel furniture, especially the *Desks* designed by L. Corbusier and Charlotte Perroux. But tubular steel furniture is redolent of progress, lightness and mass production and nearly

synonymous with the revivalist modernism that emerged from the Bauhaus. (ANI #9 is still teaching there that Ma Bonheur — taking inspiration: his bicycle — pioneered the use of tubular steel in furniture.)

In France, Art Deco was inspired by one-of-a-kind craft. As the objects have suggested, French saw them as contrary to the hyper-refined craft tradition that its industries — initiated under Louis XIV. Those traditions included the art of staining and inlaying as well as delicate lines of Rococo calligraphy were among Ruhlmann's concerns.

Masterpieces of French Art Deco

Metropolitan Museum of Art. Like the Modern and the Bauhaus, the Met was early to Deco adopt. The style's full name is with the museum's as its decorative arts and it began buying in 1922 (before the movement was named), often direct from designers. Many of the nearly 150 works have entered the collection before 1925, mostly through the funds provided by Edward Moore Jr., whose father was a vermouth who was also a great dealer of Tiffany's. In 1926 the museum was the first stop on the American tour of 400 objects from the 1925 exposition.

The Met's accession emphasizes Art Deco's (initially) hand-crafted nature. Heavy patterns, female nudes and motifs were not excluded. Differing greatly in the Bauhaus in this regard, a peculiar mix of suggestive and progressive together, which partly explains its popularity. I took tips from Egyptian and Greek revival. African art, the dynamism and the geometric style of American Indian pottery as evident here in vases by Chabouat and Charlotte Perroux. It also looked sideways to Cubism and Futurism, as is most direct in textile designs by Raoul Dufy, Michel Dubois and other

Consequently the style can run the gamut from original to something close to kitsch, sometimes under the benign of an artist.

Dubois, for example, is represented by a small, magical cigarette case whose gently undulating shape is atmospherically stippled with dark purples, greens and reds and highlighted with the points of silver. It's from 1920. Less exciting, from 1918, is a pair of sunglasses, cynically realistic: colors in partly gilt finish.

Some big names disappear, especially Lalique. His best piece is a glass cocktail stand of

smooth flanges of clear glass, each topped with a tiny parakeet, leaning alternately right or left to form a pair with its neighbor.

The selection has several surprises. Mr. Cox has included one of Matisse's exchanges based on the murals of dancers he executed in the Merion, Pa., mansion of Albert C. Barnes (now the Barnes Foundation) in the mid-1910s. The dancer's awkwardness is usually blamed on the arched walls, but maybe Art Deco is responsible. Among the more prominent of the items are rough stoneware vases and plates, twily Auguste Delaherche and Emile Deweer, that could easily date from postwar California, and a translucent blue vase by Jean Tzuc, whose dense, globs of casually formed Deco evoke the work of Memphis. So does Clement Rousseau's oblong, sharkskin and ivory newspaper

table, where dairy hairpin legs seem almost an exaggeration of Bauhaus.

A final but also remarkable rust-colored table with thick stems by Maurice Marinot's might have come from the studio of the Dutch designer Hella Jongerius. It even looks like some

kind of new-fangled rubber. The progression of works concludes with Jean Dupas's towering 100 glass chairs for the Normandie, the luxury liner, and above to Art Deco, something a lot of gold, silver and platinum. It pulls out all the stops. But there is little that has as much life as Ruhlmann's veneered furniture, punctuated with little blacks and dots of ivory that brighten awareness of his warring sense of shape and scale.

An exhibition at the Friedman Vallois gallery on East 67th Street highlights other aspects of the work of Ruhlmann, who was born Jacques-Louis, but preferred the initials to J. L. throughout his career. It includes

his version of gilt and silver Neo-Classicism — a specially commissioned seating group — that he makes his own with very square corners, and a rare carpet in red and black that blends several cultures and is characteristically punctuated with bits of white. Both are from around 1925.

From 1923, a year before his death at the age of 54, there is a file cabinet that he designed for himself. Made of macassar ebony with chromed brass pulls, it looks beyond Deco, just as its form extends beyond its base. It has an architectural solidity and might amount to an outlier moment for a postwar building by La Corbusier. Clearly Ruhlmann intended to do a lot more work.



A sideboard by Jacques-Émile Ruhlmann at Friedman Vallois gallery, at top; a Ruhlmann desk at the Metropolitan Museum, above; and, at left, a newspaper table by Clément Rousseau.

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PHILIPPE BRODSKY at Friedman & Vallois

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ART + AUCTION FRANCOIS LAFFANOUR



DESIGN POWER

PAOLA ANTONELLI
As senior curator of architecture and design at New York's Museum of Modern Art, Antonelli has organized some of the museum's most talked-about exhibitions and is currently re-installing the contemporary design collections for a debut early next year. Antonelli has also encouraged *isaa* to expand into new collecting categories, including video games, of which the museum acquired a dozen this year. In October the Italian-born design expert was appointed the first-ever director of research and development at the institution.

JEANNE GANG
The 2011 MacArthur "Genius" Fellow and principal of Chicago's Studio Gang Architects has had a banner year among artier quarters. A midcareer retrospective of her work opened this fall at the Art Institute of Chicago, and her sleek, airy design for the city's newly launched Expo Chicago art fair is sure

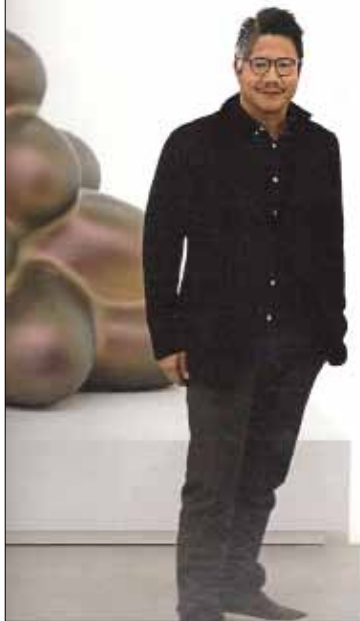
to bring the art world to her door again. She will be making her New York debut with a Meatpacking-district high-rise.

FRANCOIS LAFFANOUR
This year the Paris-based, Algerian-born design dealer celebrated 30 years at his iteration on the Rue de Seine in the St-Germain-des-Près neighborhood. Laffanour's Downtown Gallery specializes in the avant-garde, and through the years he has championed the work of 20th-century architects and designers such as Carlo Mollino, George Nakashima, Charlotte Perland, and Jean Prouvé, raising them to blue-chip rank.

PEARL LAM
In May the Chinese contemporary-art dealer returned to her native Hong Kong to open a gallery in the city's prestigious Pedder Building. The homecoming—which she inaugurated with an exhibition of Chinese contemporary abstract painting curated by scholar Gao Minglu—was a signal of both Lam's wide influence and Hong Kong's booming art market. Lam also runs three Shanghai venues along with an arts foundation in New York, and conducts considerable business for her artists out of her apartment in London. Next year she'll inaugurate a new gallery in Singapore.

YVES MACAUX
Since moving his gallery to London in 2007, the Belgian dealer has gained increasing notice for exhibiting top-notch early 20th-century Viennese design. Among the most successful design dealers at this year's Maastricht fair, Macaux sold a 1903 Josef Hoffmann lime-oaked table (for \$1.4 million) that hadn't been seen publicly since the early 1980s. This September Macaux set up temporary shop in Paris, mounting an exhibition of Viennese design on the Rue de Seine that featured masterworks by Koloman Moser, Josef Hoffmann, Carl Otto Czeschka, and Adolf Loos.

ZESTY MEYERS & EVAN SNYDERMAN
R 20th Century, the 15-year-old gallery that specializes in post-1945 international design, has stepped up to fill the void left by the recent closure of Moss. Founders Meyers and Snyderman have contributed to some of the field's major recent museum exhibitions—*isaa*'s "Century of the Child" among them—and the duo is also changing heading into emerging markets, participating in Design Days Dubai and carting the market on 20th-century Russian design.



JEANNE GANG



PEARL LAM



FRANCOIS LAFFANOUR



YVES MACAUX



ZESTY MEYERS & EVAN SNYDERMAN



PAOLA ANTONELLI

ANTIQUES TRADE GAZETTE
GALERIE AVELINE
JEAN-MARIE ET MARELLA ROSSI

international events
Paris turns on the style for 25th Biennale

The 2010 Biennale puts new emphasis on quality and presentation



EVERY two years the French art and antiques trade puts on its Paris finery and stages the *Biennale des Antiquaires*, one of the world's glitziest fairs. Parisians do things in style and the Biennale has made a point of looking good, especially since it returned to the Grand Palais in 2006 after a decade-long sojourn in the suburban confines of the Carrousel du Louvre.

There is more than enough space in the 100,000 sq m exhibition hall for the 80 art and antique dealers and seven pavilions who will stand, a slight reduction on 2008.

The fair is organized by the *Syndicat National des Antiquaires* (France's national antique dealers' association), under the presidency of René Aaron. This will be the 25th Biennale and it runs from September 10-22. The SNIA has gone full out for an emphasis on quality and simplified the layout

themed around the enduring influence of the antique world. It will mix antiquities, sculptures, herbicides and minerals with later works showing the classical influence on art movements from the Renaissance through to the neoclassical era.

Just as the pieces from antiquity that inspired the later works are the life size Roman statue known as the Barberis Hercules - a 2nd century AD Roman marble purchased without its head or arms by Cardinal Francesco Barberini in 1627 and restored by Francesco Cornelli, and the Dashkov vase - a Roman vase from the 1st century AD that was acquired in the city in 1780 by Prince Dashkov, friend of Catherine the Great.

Of the later creations that these ancient works inspired, a centerpiece will be the bronze double portrait head that the Kugler acquired at the Paris Saint Laurent and Paris Bonaparte auction last year.

This was one of the 18th century bronzes cast by Jean-Baptiste Tuby at the request of François I for his cabinet at the Louvre. It is, says Kugler, the last with prominent breasts in private hands.

There is also a 17th century Roman bronze of the Laocöid that Tuby belonged to Louis XIV and a group of 17th and 18th century marble and furniture from of Roman emperors and deities.

The *Antiquissima* display has been designed by Pier Luigi Pizzi, the Italian opera director and museum exhibitor designer. He has set out the Kugler acquisitions in a series of rooms surrounded by 300,000 high numerical rounds, paying homage to earlier performances like *Rome*, *Théâtre Impérial* and the *Alan Brothers*. *Chair de la République* by *Giuseppe Penone* will mark a decade in the place *Reveries*, near the *Église du Sacre*, with a

with a design by artist *Renée*. Between of *Agence Océane* which has the stand leading off a single side aisle and a large central space.

The event remains a predominantly French showcase, albeit a very grand one, aiming to spotlight Paris as a major art centre with a strong presence of the prestigious and long-standing names from the French trade, such as *Beaumont, Kraemer, Parisis, Didier Aronson* and *Gismondi*.

But there is also a solid international presence, with just over a quarter of the exhibitors coming from other countries, notably *Netherlands, Belgium* and the UK are each fielding seven names (including a return appearance from *Axel Verwerdt* who exhibited independently two years ago), while the US brings in 100 overseas entrants have helped here. Compared with 2008, when at eight of the Biennale recipients hailed from France, this year six of the 73 new exhibitors are foreign entrants. *Fitch & Co* and *Richard Nagy* from the UK, *Marlborough, L.L. Lally, L. & M. Arts* and *Jean Jacques* from the US.

The time around the Biennale's focus is very much on classic art and antiques. Personally strong suits are paintings (both Old Masters and modern classic), 18th century furniture, Art Deco and jewelry, but visitors can also expect Asian works, ethnographic, sculpture and antiquities.

There will be some interesting presentational twists. *Kraemer & Cie* will be setting up their spacious stand as an imaginary and imagined recreation of the White House's Oval Office, filled

with 18th century French furnishings. The idea is to use an iconic space to demonstrate the adaptability of French antique furniture to any interior.

Another *Jean Bessiere*, a specialist in 19th and 20th century ceramics, is also going for an inventive look. He is collaborating with designer *Frans-Josef Graf* to recreate the stand taken by the French architect and designer *George Goussier* (1805-1870) at the 1850 Exposition Universelle where 100 houses was set at its best. This will include art pottery by famous French ceramicists of the period like *Henri Adrien Dabry* and *Lucien Lévy Durrmer*.

Longstanding Biennale exhibitors *Galerie Vella* are keeping their stand content under wraps, waiting until the Biennale opens to unveil what they are bringing as a solo exhibition.

As well as the Biennale and two specialist ceramics and tribal circuits, discussed on pages 14 and 16, a number of individual dealers are capitalizing on the moment crowds visiting Paris to stage special exhibitions in their own galleries.

The long established Paris dealership *J. Kugel*, who moved to new left bank premises at the Hotel Colson on the quai *Amédée France* in 2004, will unveil their major new show *Antiquissima* on

with a selection of his works and their new book on the French designer, featuring photographs from his family.

Among the Biennale's other highlights, *Antibes based Galerie Gismondi* will be unveiling a rare 17th century School of Fontainebleau painting and a 19th century marble bust of a woman whose provenance can be traced back to 1800, while modern art specialist *Yves Gerson's* stand will feature an extraordinary bed and screen created in 1914 by the Surrealist artist *Mai Breton*.

Sculpture will range from classical antiquity to specialist fields like 19th and 20th century amateur works as featured on the stands of London's *Stalwood Gallery and Fashion Unions de Bronze*.

Another aspect of the Biennale, one that is also a feature of *137AF Maastricht*, is a special section devoted to new exhibitors. Stepping stone to the Biennale proper is a buying display of 20 objects chosen by the SNA from 35 galleries representing a younger generation of dealers who have been in their own premises for less than five years.



Below: *Antique Society* will be the back to *Alain Mandouze* at the Biennale where the pair of 18th-century chairs were from a 19th-century period in 1810.



Below: A sketch showing the design of *Kraemer's* imaginative recreation of the Oval Office at the White House, filled with 18th-century French furniture for the Paris Biennale. Top left: For his first appearance at the Paris Biennale, New York-based specialist *James Kelly* will be taking a display of the fine art of France's China, including this pair of white Chinese long-handled chairs priced at \$120,000. Bottom left: The new original poster study of a portrait by *Philippe de Champaigne* made original on the occasion is the only poster session with the fair in this position and will be shown by *Ulmann & Brossier* at the Biennale.



Right: The *Barberis Hercules*, a Roman marble statue based on a 4th-century Greek original and restored in 1628 after it was acquired by *Cardinal Francesco Barberini*. One of the highlights of the *Antiquissima* show at *Galerie J. Kugel*.

Below: The *Chair de la République*, 1870, by *Giuseppe Penone*. The sculpture was made in 1970 and is the last work by *Penone* to be exhibited at the Biennale. It is a tribute to the French Republic and is made of 300,000 high numerical rounds. It is exhibited in the *Antiquissima* stand at *Galerie Vella*.

VANITY FAIR FRANCOIS LAFFANOUR



Best in Show

The **Pavilion of Art & Design (PAD)**, the highly esteemed fair for galleries and dealers of mainly late-19th- and 20th-century major works and masterpieces of visual art, objects, and furniture, has been going like gangbusters in London since 2007, running concurrently with the Frieze Art Fair. Now PAD's founders, Parisian dealers Patrick Perrin and Stéphane Custot—two bespoke-suited, eagle-eyed connoisseurs of decorative pieces—are bringing their *aha moui* souk, composed of 49 handpicked galleries, to the Park Avenue Armory from November 10 to 14. The idea in London was a kind of “walk up” to Frieze, which is an event for contemporary art only. PAD fills the needs and desires of well-heeled buyers who want the best of what Perrin calls “the antiques of the Modern era.” No Damien Hirst sharks suspended in formaldehyde-filled tanks are permitted. Brillo boxes: O.K. PAD in its short life has attracted a slavish following, and its organizers brag that the likes of Yoko Ono, Valentino, Giorgio Armani, Zaha Hadid,

and Bryan Ferry have in the past come early to snap up the best of the show. Perrin thinks that the crowded New York fall circuit of art shows and antiques-hawking can sustain a new entry—Frieze is coming to the city in May. “There is always room for examples of the best,” he says. —MATT TYRNAUER



Untitled (Cowboys),
by Richard Prince, 1986



Asymmetrical
“Closed” bookshelves
with aluminum sliding
doors, circa 1956,
by designer Charlotte
Perriand.

TRADITIONAL HOME FRANCOIS LAFFANOUR

NEW+NEXT ART SEEN

Wish List

'Tis the season to ogle the objets at art fairs and auctions while remembering to give generously to charities that support the arts.

—WRITTEN BY DOBS ATHEIENS WITH NICOLE BENTLEY

Undervalued Gem

We love the gummy flakes of color contained within an opal's watery jets, but one of the world's prettiest gemstones has a fairly bad rap. "It's associated with bad luck if you buy one for yourself," explains gem expert Alexander Eblen of Leslie Hindman Auctioneers. If you aren't superstitious, bid on vintage opals at auction, where they are seriously underpriced. Rago auctions knocked down this Edwardian beauty for \$1,464. For a stacking staple, check out ragoarts.com and lesliehindman.com.



Little Folks

Child-related folk art always caught the eye of retired pediatric radiologist Jane Katcher, who has assembled one of the country's leading folk art collections. She shares that collection in the forthcoming *Expressions of Innocence and Exuberance: Volume II* (Yale University Press; \$95). This 19th-century tall-case clock, which Katcher describes as "spectacularly bold and wildly expressive," was made for a child by a grown-up with a youthful heart, she says. Currently, it resides in her Aspen home at the end of a long hallway. Judging from the psychedelic acid-green color, it's no surprise that Katcher's first love was contemporary art. To see more, tap into janekatchercollection.org.



20th-Century Antiques

A polished aluminum cabinet by revolutionary French designer Jean Prouvé will be offered at the first Pavilion of Art & Design show (pachry.net) in Manhattan, set for November 10–14. In its third year in London and Paris, PAD features "antiquaries of the modern age." Watch for Prouvé collector Brad Pitt in Galerie Downtown's booth. ▶



Picture-Perfect Venice

No art lover wants Venice to sink, but New York designer Matthew White raises cash to tackle the problem. A passionate preservationist, White is the new chairman of Save Venice Inc., a nonprofit American group dedicated to restoring the city's art and architecture. "There are more historic buildings per square mile in Venice than any place on earth," he says. His favorite rescue so far is San Sebastiano church, below, decorated by Paolo Veronese. "I'm excited because it's an entire interior—paintings, floor tiles, architecture, even an organ. This is to Veronese what the Sistine Chapel is to Michelangelo." Proceeds from the book *Save Venice Inc.* benefit the cause (savevenice.org).



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SECRÉTAIRE GÉNÉRAL DU SYNDICAT NATIONAL DES ANTIQUAIRES

