

**CHAIR.  
LIFESTYLE.**

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## Standard Chair

model	No. 4
designed by	Jean Prouvé
	1934/1950
	Nancy, France
manufactured by	Vitra since 2002



opinion

Patrick Seguin, the founder and owner of Galerie Patrick Seguin in Paris, has probably studied and promoted the value and historical significance of Jean Prouvé's design more earnestly than anyone else. His passion for Jean Prouvé's works started when he first discovered the Compas tables and Métropole No. 305 chairs at the Paris flea Market (Les Puces de Saint-Ouen) in the late 1980s. Since then, he has gone wherever Jean Prouvé's works are to learn and understand the artist's design heritage. Also, he showcased his collection of Jean Prouvé's works at several global art markets, helping to boost the status and authority of the artist to the top of the collectible design scene. Editor Dami Yoo Photographer Miyeon Jeon

# patrick seguin

You've been running Galerie Patrick Seguin for 35 years. Please tell us how it has grown into one of the most representative French modernist design galleries.

Initially, I dealt with all design works of the 1950s before I decided to focus on five French architects and designers who had worked side by side in the mid-20th century: Jean Prouvé, Charlotte Perriand, Le Corbusier, Pierre Jeanneret, and Jean Royere. They were innovators and thinkers who came up with meaningful ideas at the beginning of the postwar industrialization and mass production period. Since we started to focus on the five creators, Galerie Patrick Seguin has become more specialized through exhibitions and publication projects on different themes. Since the 2000s, we've consistently participated in global art markets, such as Design Miami and Art Basel, promoting the value and beauty of postwar French design. Also, in collaboration with Jean Nouvel, the renowned French architect who designed this gallery, we've worked on several projects on Jean Prouvé's architecture, too.

It seems that you particularly love Jean Prouvé among the five designers. What made you fascinated by his design?

I've had close relationships with many artists since the early 1980s when I started collecting contemporary art. Many people in the art circles seemed to have already recognized Jean Prouvé's aesthetics and philosophy and shared his value. The first place that I found and bought his works at was the Paris Saint-Ouen flea market in the late 1980s. I bought the Compas dorm room tables and Métropole No. 305 cafeteria chairs. Although the chair had a simple design and was made in the 1950s, I was fascinated by its unique beauty. I could tell it had a timeless design. Shortly afterward, I started running a gallery in the Bastille district in Paris. Still, everything about Jean Prouvé interests me.

Could you tell us about the atmosphere of the collectible design scene in the 1990s when you opened this gallery?

From the late 1980s, there was a new perception of modernism in Europe and the US. Keen-eyed collectors showed interest in industrial design products that had symbolic significance, which led to the rapid growth of the collectible design market. For instance, Ronald Lauder, cofounder of Neue Galerie in

New York, and globally influential collectors like Ileana Sonnabend, Larry Gagosian, and Peter Brant bought some of our collection in the initial days of our gallery. Also, the regular people we met at both tranquil museums and vibrant international design fairs really loved the originality and artistry of Jean Prouvé's design. Seeing how well the public received him – regardless of the exhibition format or country – deepened my respect for him. I was satisfied that his philosophy and pioneering design were properly recognized as a cultural heritage.

Since the 2010s, Galerie Patrick Seguin has collaborated with some of the world's top contemporary art galleries to showcase the Jean Prouvé collection in a number of arrangements. What's the story behind these collaborations?

One day, I realized that the works of Jean Prouvé and contemporary art have a certain synergy. For instance, Jean Prouvé and US-based sculptor Alexander Calder were friends who kept in touch and collaborated on projects. So, we put on an exhibition of Calder's mobiles and Prouvé's works in 2013 in collaboration with Gagosian Gallery in Paris. In 2015, again with the gallery but this time in New York, we showcased Jean Prouvé's demountable housing alongside the works of John Chamberlain, a US-based sculptor known for his scrap metal art. Although their art fields are different, the two were both innovators who tapped into the potential of metal as a material for art. I think it's very important to note that Jean Prouvé not only pioneered industrial technology and minimalist aesthetics but he also grew up in an artistic environment and maintained close relationships with fellow artists.

In what aspects do you think Prouvé's design is pioneering?

His works harmoniously embody technological progress and a unique sense of aesthetics. It's also impressive to see the influences of the creators around him. He was the son of Victor Prouvé, a famous painter, and he was close with Émile Gallé, a French artist who worked with glass and was a founder of the École de Nancy, or the Nancy School. Let me tell you a story. One day, Victor Prouvé was talking to his son about flowers, saying, "A hollow stem has more resistance than a solid one." Interestingly, the structural logic

**"I think the Standard chair is an excellent combination of industrial aesthetics and ergonomic principles. His efforts to effectively use materials to achieve comfort, grace, and durability through a simple design led to this model example of timeless design."**

of Jean Prouvé's design began there. When designing a furniture piece or an architectural pillar, he used a hollow structure by bending sheet steel to achieve his important principle of creating lightweight, sturdy, and structurally logical designs. The legs on the Standard chair and the axial steel portal frames in the demountable houses are hollow structures designed for utmost durability.

Among Jean Prouvé's design legacies, the Standard chair is admired in particular by not only design enthusiasts but also non-artistic lay people.

That's because it is perfect in both form and function. I think the Standard chair is an excellent combination of industrial aesthetics and ergonomic principles. His efforts to effectively use materials to achieve comfort, grace, and durability through a simple design led to this model example of timeless design.

Galerie Patrick Seguin has raised awareness about design from the past being an important cultural asset and heritage that needs protection. I think the publication project, which involved compiling volumes of records on Jean Prouvé's design, must have played a particularly significant role in that.

We published an 800-page book on Jean Prouvé's furniture and architecture 20 years ago and released a revised version five years ago. This book contains a 60-page section that introduces private collectors' spaces from around the world with Jean Prouvé's works, and it shows how his works harmonize in other art, architecture, and design environments. My space is in there, too. (*laughs*) In addition, we published three book series on his demountable housing over the course of four years. Each series consists of five books, and each book delves deep into one architectural structure and includes photographs of the past and now.

You use Jean Prouvé's furniture in your house, which I expected since you are an ardent fan of his works.

Of course. I own several modern artworks including modernist design furniture pieces. The Standard chair is paired with a dining table. His design perfectly matches my collection.

What has made you stay passionate about Jean Prouvé for over 30 years?

His great design values are what consistently inspire me. His design embodies out-of-the-box ideas, thinks about sustainability, and is human-centered. Even from a historical point of view, his brilliance shines brightly. His pioneering spirit and innovative technology inspire collectors throughout the world, with his works serving as a meaningful cultural heritage and a cornerstone in the journeys of many design enthusiasts and collectors. As a collector, I cannot help but to promote his achievements and preserve his heritage.

Are there any memorable anecdotes from your long journey of collecting his art?

My collection shows my fascination with Jean Prouvé over a long period of time, just like a tightly knit tapestry. One memorable anecdote is the day I found the demountable house and furniture that had been designed by Jean Prouvé. It was being transported to Africa. He came up with this solution to make transporting it easier while considering the climate of Africa, which is different from that of France. I also remember a day in 1994 when I purchased 454 chairs and 87 tables from the University of Paris City (Université Paris Cité) and brought them to my gallery. I have a photo from that day that has never been published before. (*see page 65*)

You must have encountered so many works by Jean Prouvé so far. What criteria do you have that determines whether a piece is worth owning?

My priority is to make sure that it's from a reliable source and it's not rusty. Also, I try to collect as many different types of works as possible. Everything that falls into the category of seats, such as chairs, stools, and armchairs,

helps us comprehensively understand the range of the creator's works.

You once said that you focused on modernist design because of your respect for forward-looking design. In this context, are there any designers or brands that you're currently watching in furniture, graphic, fashion, architecture, or some other area?

Let me tell you about fashion brands.

I appreciate the vision of Raf Simons for the new technological possibilities he's introduced. The creativeness of Anthony Vaccarello of Saint Laurent and the modern aspects of The Row are also attractive. These brands embody a curatorial approach, keen attention to detail, and more sophisticated, forward-looking design.

Lastly, please tell us your plans or tell us about something you think is important.

I'm always working to expand Jean Prouvé's architectural collection and I'm closely watching changes in the contemporary art scene. As a collector, I try to be as open-minded as possible to promote the cultural and heritage value of design and to help others fully appreciate it. In this regard, one of the biggest experiences for me was an immersive exhibition recently held at our gallery, which combined virtual reality (VR) and historical archives. Jean Prouvé's house was installed in the center of the exhibition hall, and we provided the VR so that the audience could feel as if they were in an industrial house on the banks of the Seine. I'm also planning to participate in art fairs around the world, including some in New York, Miami, Basel, and Paris.



