





## Architecture

FROM LEFT, GALLERISTS PATRICK SEGUIN AND HIS WIFE LAURENCE WITH ARCHITECT IVAN HARBOUR OF ROGERS STIRK HARBOUR + PARTNERS (RSH), CHECKING ON THE ASSEMBLY OF JEAN PROUVÉ'S DEMOUNTABLE HOUSE AND THE MANUFACTURE OF RSH'S POD ADDITIONS AT THE STAGE ONE WORKSHOP NEAR YORK

# Future shack

A Jean Prouvé prefab shelter gains mod-con pods and a new lease of life

PHOTOGRAPHY: DANIEL STIER WRITER: NATALIA RACHLIN



## Architecture



Photography: © Galerie Patrick Seguin. Illustrations: © Roger Stirk Harbour + Partner, courtesy Galerie Patrick Seguin.

**Y**ork might not be an obvious place to go looking for Jean Prouvé masterpieces, but down an unremarkable dirt road nestled amid yellow rapeseed fields, inside a hangar-sized warehouse, sure enough, there's a six-metre-square Prouvé demountable house sitting in a corner, looking rather quaint. Its weathered steel-and-timber frame reveals the 70-odd years that have passed since it was originally built in 1944, as part of an order for emergency housing from the Ministry of Reconstruction and Town Planning, to rehouse war victims in bomb-ravaged France.

Nearby, two newly commissioned, unfinished rocket-shaped pods, their insulation and metal framework still exposed, are propped on stilts as if preparing for take-off. When completed, the cylindrical capsules, designed by Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners (RSHP), will host kitchen and bathroom facilities that can be attached to the Prouvé house. Come mid-June, new and old will combine to transform a structure once intended as a disaster relief shelter into a modern holiday retreat that will be showcased at Design Miami/Basel by the Paris-based Galerie Patrick Seguin.

'Isn't it just beautiful?' asks Patrick Seguin as he tours the Prouvé structure. He is on a visit to the workshop of Stage One, the firm behind the manufacture of RSHP's pods (as well as the construction of recent Serpentine Pavilions), where the house is being assembled. 'These buildings were conceived as temporary constructions to meet a necessity. They survived in very limited numbers and, in order to ensure they don't disappear altogether, we must give them a second chance, a second function and a second life - yes, they must live again!'

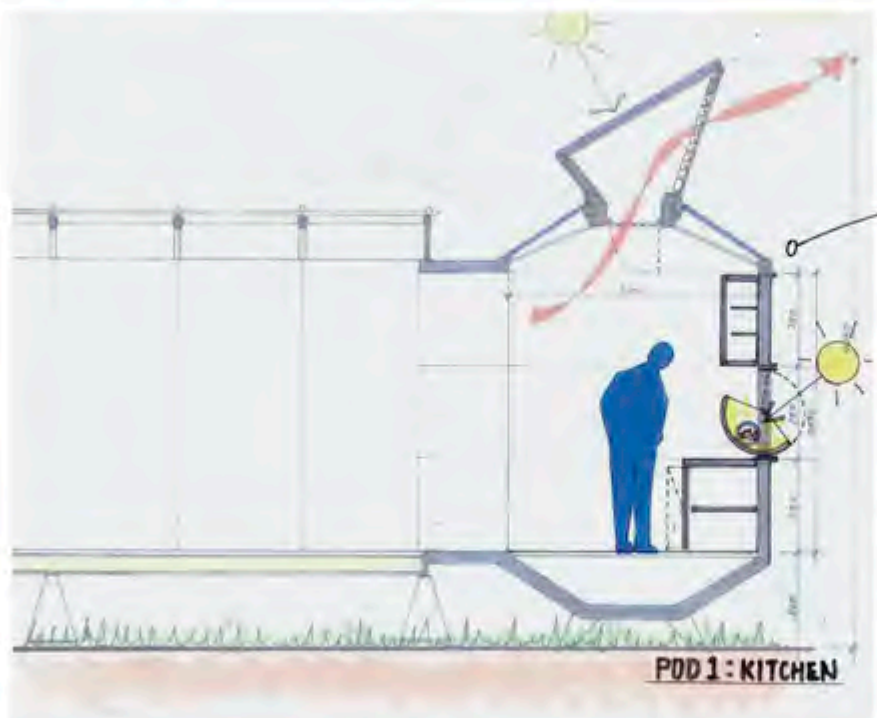
Undeniably, the humble house is beautiful in its rusted, rustic simplicity and enduringly relevant in form and thinking. Seguin and RSHP's ambition is to both preserve and reinvent a piece of architectural genius, lending it new power to engage and inspire, its significance underlined by extending its life into the 21st century. They hope the redesign might also encourage fresh thinking about demountable disaster relief housing.

The house is one of dozens that have passed through Seguin's ownership since he founded his eponymous gallery in 1989, becoming one of the preeminent dealers»



*Test assembly in Yorkshire*





An early sketch of the kitchen pod

a kitchen powered by two service trolleys that slide discreetly underneath the house's frame: one is for recycled rain water (drinking water will be topped up separately), the other for electricity (from solar panels). RSHP worked with engineers from ChapmanBDSP and Arup to iron out the many technical challenges that come with fitting complex functionalities into such a small space.

The project has also involved refurbishing existing elements: vacuum insulation was applied in-between the house frame's wooden panels, while the original roof and floor have been replaced with more durable solutions that will hold up in diverse climates. A new outdoor sun deck reveals a dual function: a cantilevered weight system allows the terrace to be folded up and used as a shutter.

'What's fascinating to me is that you're very aware of what you are proposing for every five millimeters of space,' says Harbour, who hopes that the adaptation will foster a discussion about energy efficiency, which is at the heart of the design. He underlines that the house is an exercise in moderation, rather than luxury.

'Prouvé once said he would love to make architecture that leaves no trace on the landscape,' adds Seguin. 'This was 35 or more years before the word "sustainable" was even pronounced - this was so ahead of its time, and now we can bring that vision to life.'

For collectors whose interest might be peaked by the RSHP adaptation, it's tough luck - this project is not for sale. After Design Miami/Basel, it will head to the south of France. The Seguins will install it on a property where their friend, the architect Jean Nouvel, is currently building them a home. They will occupy the Prouvé while the Nouvel is built and, later, it might transition into a guest house, when it's not out on loan to a museum or educational institution, which Seguin hopes it will be frequently.

'In Basel we will show the house furnished with Prouvé's own designs,' says Seguin. 'Whenever I've shown these furnished houses in the past, they are so beautiful, you just want to move in.' This time around, it seems Seguin intends to do just that. ★

On show at Design Miami/Basel, 16-21 June, [patrickseguin.com](http://patrickseguin.com); [rsh-p.com](http://rsh-p.com); [designmiami.com](http://designmiami.com). A London outpost of Galerie Patrick Seguin is due to open in September

of Prouvé furniture and architecture. Seguin embarked on the project in December 2013, approaching Richard Rogers, an old friend, about RSHP undertaking the adaptation, confident that the practice would respect the original structure, while offering an innovative solution. RSHP and Prouvé also had a bit of history: the French architect was president of the jury that determined the plans for the Centre Pompidou, and so played a pivotal role in selecting the now iconic Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano design. 'I liked the idea of placing these two great practices into a dialogue with one another, a few generations apart,' says Seguin.

'The brief was rather simple: turn this house into an autonomous retreat that can function anywhere in the world, from summers in the south of France, to winters in Colorado,' says Ivan Harbour, the RSHP partner leading the project along with Tadashi Arai, making it the firm's smallest project in scale, though not its least complex. 'Transforming a disaster relief house that is just about enclosure into a space with demountable plumbing and electrics is not so simple,' he notes. For RSHP, the key was to touch the existing building as lightly as possible and avoid aping Prouvé's language. Their adaptation, which adds just eight square metres of space to the house's existing 36, would be clearly distinct and separate, while staying true to Prouvé's mission.

The original structure's prefabricated components could be assembled in as little as a day, a truly mobile home built without any foundation. The adapted structure is just as light on its feet and the house is now entirely self-sufficient, equipped with a bathroom and



The pods upgrade the house without taking up internal space



They stand on adjustable metal legs