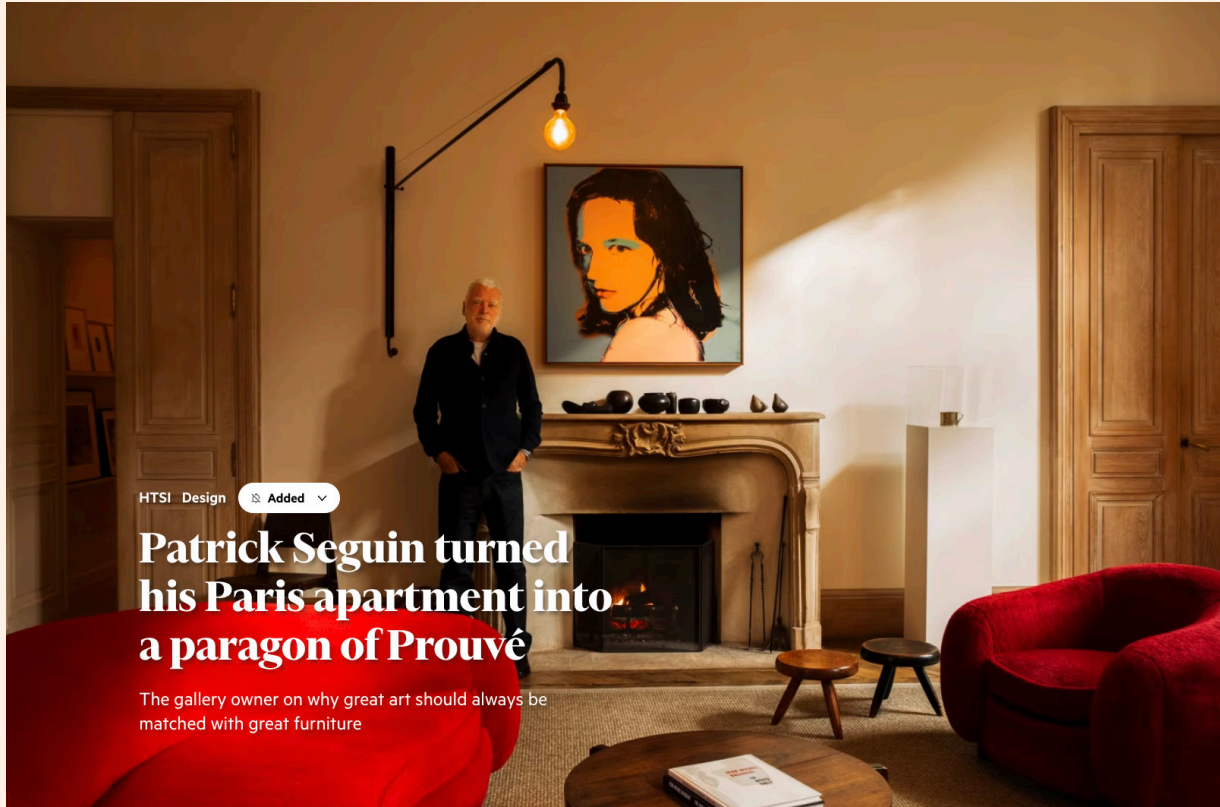


# FINANCIAL TIMES



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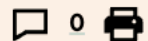
## Patrick Seguin turned his Paris apartment into a paragon of Prouvé

The gallery owner on why great art should always be matched with great furniture

Patrick Seguin at home in Paris © Matthieu Salvaing/The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc/Licensed by DACS, London

As told to Jacqueline Daly. Photography by Matthieu Salvaing

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My wife Laurence and I have been together for 37 years: we opened our Paris gallery Galerie Patrick Seguin, which specialises in 20th-century furniture by French architects, in 1989. We've been in this apartment in the Marais for about 16 years. The building dates back to 1610, with beautiful architecture reminiscent of the Place des Vosges, and a small garden that we use in summer and winter. We have high ceilings and wooden floors – the one in the living room is original, from the 17th century. We like patina, things with age, and also that the floors here are sometimes creaky. Our passion is to show the dialogue between art, architecture and design, and our house is designed as a canvas for this interaction.



Visiteur FV11 armchair (left), c1947, Visiteur No 352 armchair, 1952, and Guéridon Bas table, 1952, all by Jean Prouvé. The stools are by Charlotte Perriand and Pierre Jeanneret. The 1953 floor lamp is by Serge Mouille. On the wall hangs a portrait of Nick Cave, 1996, by Richard Kern © Matthieu Salvaing/Richard Kern

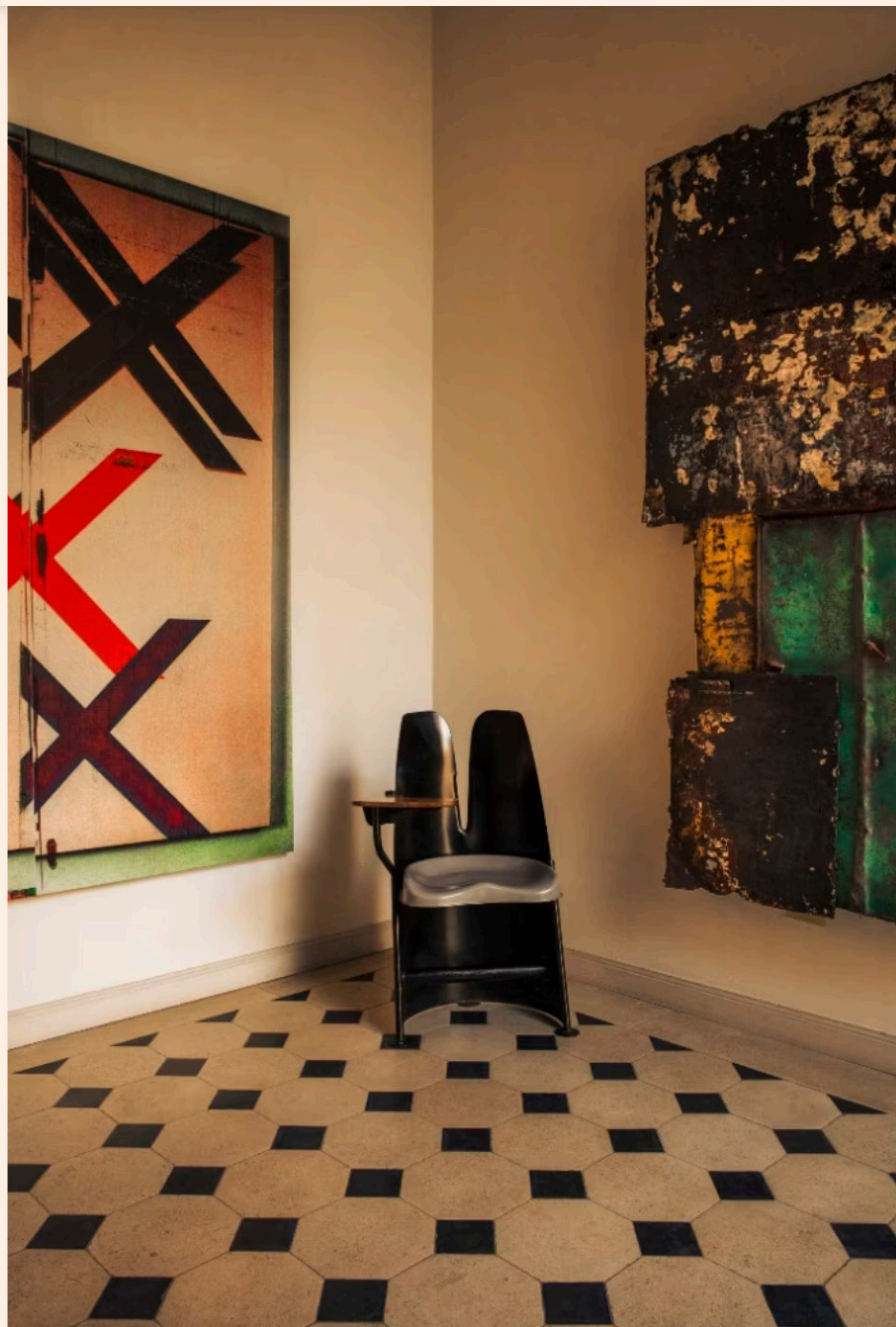




Armchair (far right), c1947, low table, 1952, and swivelling armchair (behind desk), 1951, all by Jean Prouvé. Cabinet, 1958, by Charlotte Perriand. Desk, 1948, and swivelling armchair (in front of desk), 1948, by Perriand and Pierre Jeanneret. Cube stool (under mantelpiece), 1956-59, by Le Corbusier. Untitled (Pure Crimson Butterfly 43.27) (above mantelpiece), 2012, by Mark Grotjahn. Paintings and gouaches (four small frames on wall above radiator) by Dike Blair. Methyl Viologen, 1997, by Damien Hirst © Matthieu Salvaing/Damien Hirst and Science Ltd. All rights reserved, DACS 2025/Courtesy of Anton Kern Gallery, New York/Richard Kern

At [Galerie Patrick Seguin](#) we have concentrated on five names: Jean Prouvé, Jean Royère, Charlotte Perriand, Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret. Our main passion is Prouvé, because he was a friend to artists, and many of the pieces in our home are testament to this. The Alexander Calder sculpture on the table beside the French doors in the living room was a gift from Calder to Prouvé. They became friends in the early 1950s and regularly exchanged ideas about sculpture and architecture. I have some of their correspondence in my office: one is a letter to Prouvé requesting the engineering of a base for one of Calder's artworks. There are two arrows on the letter, and the space between them illustrates the exact thickness he wanted the steel.

Laurence and I discovered Prouvé in the late '80s, when we bought a Standard chair and Compass table from the [Saint-Ouen flea market](#). We were instantly hooked. There was a long economic recession in Europe, and in 1992 we went to the refectory at the [Cité Internationale Universitaire](#) in Paris and bought 454 chairs and 87 Compass tables being sold by the French administration. We tried to convince our friends and the few collectors we had then to buy 10 chairs for 1,000 francs [about £120] each, without much success [an original now can cost from around £20,000]. Early on, I understood how important it was to keep pieces – to create an inventory.



On the left hangs *Untitled*, 2023, by Wade Guyton; on the right, *California California*, 2022, by Akeem Smith © Matthieu Salvaing/Akeem Smith/Wade Guyton, courtesy of Matthew Marks Gallery



*“I love this Lecture Hall chair, the Bergère, which came from the faculté de droit de l’Université d’Aix-Marseille. To sit in it is to love Prouvé. It is a precursor of ergonomic design”*

Prouvé is a wonderful anchor for art. He embodies a kind of minimalism that is not a fit for everyone, but when you put his work together with contemporary art an alchemy occurs between them. I started to collect contemporary art in the late '80s, mesmerised by Warhol, Basquiat and [Calder](#). Sadly, I never got to meet those artists, but have been lucky enough to forge amazing relationships with others. [There's been Damien Hirst](#), but I also established relationships with Cy Twombly, Richard Prince and Mark Grotjahn. Since then there's also been Rudolf Stingel and Jonas Wood, among others. Their art is here, all around us. We are surrounded by friends. And Damien, Stingel, Grotjahn and Wood all have a passion for Prouvé and collect his furniture.



Seguin's living room, with Ours Polaire sofa and armchairs, c1947, by Jean Royère. Guéridon bas table, 1952, by Jean Prouvé. 507 table, 1952, by Charlotte Perriand (on back wall) and stools, c1955, by fireplace. Pierre Chareau Hélice SN9 table, 1929 (between armchairs). On the right hangs Runaway Nurse #3, 2008, by Richard Prince and on the left is Tina Freeman, 1975, by Andy Warhol. By the door is Head, 1983, by Jean-Michel Basquiat. On the table stands a 1974 sculpture by Alexander Calder, given to Jean Prouvé © Matthieu Salvaing/Richard Prince/The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts/Licensed by DACS, London/Calder Foundation, New York/DACS, London/Estate of Jean-Michel Basquiat, licensed by Artestar, New York

*“I love Jean Royère almost as much as Prouvé – the red sofa and chairs in the living room are by Royère. Finding these pieces is my passion, my business and my life, and when I look into my future, I see no retirement because I know that with good health I will still be doing this to my last minute. One piece of art I know I will own one day is a Christopher Wool – that is missing from my collection.”*

Design also anchors the art in our apartment. So often we see beautiful houses with extraordinary art but the furniture lets them down, as it's not the same level. Chairs are the portal to Prouvé's work and the Standard chairs [also known as the Métropole 305 design] around our dining table tell you everything you need to know about his concept. The frame is 1.5mm of bent steel and the back legs are hollow to distribute the stress of weight throughout the floor. Prouvé was a great engineer. He applied technology from aviation and the motor industries to construct furniture and architecture. I love the Swing-Jib lamp in our living room for the same reason. It pivots from one side to the other at exactly 180 degrees and has small wings with rubber in case it touches the wall. It is sublime.





© Matthieu Salvaing

*“This is my secret room: it has 13 models of my Prouvé Demountable Houses – mostly unique prototypes, including my 6x6 Demountable House, which I loaned to Paddy McKillen for Château La Coste. People can experience it rather than it being locked away in my warehouse. Richard Rogers, whom I loved so much, added the cylindrical kitchen and bathroom pods to the house.”*

Laurence and I are always moving pieces around the place, particularly the art. We live with a lot of Prouvé pieces in Paris, but there are more in our new house, built for us by the architect [Jean Nouvel](#) in the south of France. (I’ve known Jean for 40 years, he designed our gallery, and I’m godfather to his daughter.) We also have pieces in storage, including in a warehouse in Nancy, where Prouvé was born, because if we kept them at home we wouldn’t be able to move. Many are large architectural artefacts, such as his porthole doors. I also collect his Demountable Houses [prefab homes designed to house displaced people after the second world war]. We have 185 acres in the south of France and we’ve nestled seven Demountable Houses on the hill. Thirty years ago, when I first started buying Prouvé’s houses, people said to me: “Do you want to live in a barrack?” They didn’t understand, but it was the cabin of our dreams. One of the prototypes took more than 10 years to restore. They were built for emergencies or for schools in rural areas, the components shipped on site and mostly built in one day. Prouvé was way ahead of his time promoting an architecture that left no trace on the landscape.





Library table, c1955, by Pierre Jeanneret, with Métropole chairs, c1950, and Cité armchair, c1933, all by Jean Prouvé. Nuages bookshelves, 1958, by Charlotte Perriand. On the wall hangs Orange Maxima, 2012, by Nate Lowman © Matthieu Salvaing/Nate Lowman





"You see the old Paris in the tunnels below the house where I have my wine cellar, and there's a really old nook that I call Seguin's cave, which I believe may have been a latrine. I said to Mark Dion, a great artist, that I would love to commission a piece for my latrine because I knew he would enjoy the idea. His artwork features everyday objects that are coated in epoxy resin paint, and shine out from the darkness. It's based on his Theatre Of The Natural World. The kids love it because it's spooky." © Matthieu Salvaing





Antony daybed, 1953, and stool, 1951, both by Jean Prouvé. Momentary Love Blossom, 2018, by Damien Hirst © Matthieu Salvaing/Damien Hirst and Science Ltd. All rights reserved, DACS 2025

*“The bedroom opens up to the garden and we have the view all the way down it, which is wonderful. We fling open the doors and enjoy it. We have a great Damien [Hirst] in there – which we chose because of the garden. It frames a very rare Prouvé stool and his famous daybed, which came from Antony University.”*

Sometimes we rotate the furniture and bring pieces out of storage. The two '40s Visiteur armchairs beside the bookshelf are recent additions. The only art that will never move is the Warhol painting of Tina Freeman in the living room. I bought it 25 years ago and it's the heart of our apartment. It's so much more complex than people think: the silk screening overlays his painting. I first saw it in a gallery in Cologne; it took me five years to buy – the price kept going up, it was always just out of reach. My prospective brain was always searching for art, and it's magnificent. We have other masters too. The painting on the opposite wall is Richard Prince's *Runaway Nurse* and there are three Basquiat drawings adjacent to that. Even now I spend hours looking at them.

My office is my sanctuary. I am surrounded by all the things I love – it's a distillation of our lives. Among the photographs is one of our daughter Pauline, who has her own contemporary gallery in Berlin called [Heidi](#), and there is a certificate with the medals I received when I was awarded Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (2018), then Officier (2023), by the French Ministry of Culture. Both make us very proud.



I love paper. I don't own a computer, I read a newspaper every day and some of my most cherished collections are documents, including correspondence between Mr Brâncuși and Prouvé from 1927 proposing Prouvé's atelier produce a steel cast test for Brâncuși's 50m *Oiseau dans l'espace*, a sculpture intended for the garden of Villa Noailles. I also have a very special document marked 493 of 750 from 1971: part of the paperwork for the competition to design the [Centre Pompidou](#). Prouvé was the chairman of the competition and supported these two young architects Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers. No one in Paris wanted their building, but thankfully this guy from Nancy was a visionary.



Ramp with lamps (above mirror painting), 1954, chair, 1934, and stool, 1952, all by Prouvé. Pigeonhole desk, c1957-58, by Pierre Jeanneret. Desk lamp by Serge Mouille. On wall, *Eating Buggers III* (left), 1985, by Bruce Nauman, and *Shift/Rise #19*, 2011, by Liz Deschenes © Matthieu Salvaing/Liz Deschenes/Bruce Nauman

*“One of the first pieces of art we bought is the Bruce Nauman painting in the small office where Laurence likes to work. It’s her retreat, as I travel a lot. The painting is a very early example, paired with a beautiful Pierre Jeanneret Pigeonhole desk.”*

Some of my favourite things are displayed on a table below our Jonas Wood painting. There’s an invitation-catalogue to the Andy Warhol exhibition *Thirteen Most Wanted Men* from 1967 marked “Dossier 2357”. You can imagine the excitement it ignited just looking at it! Among the vintage books is *The Catcher in the Rye*, not by Salinger but [Richard Prince](#) – his controversial reproduction of Salinger’s first edition from 2011. He dedicated this one to me. All the ephemera is personal, sentimental. I also have a Richard Prince book for his show at my gallery in 2008. He’s written inside: “Patrick and Laurence. Happy Wedding Day!” There’s also a very rare book by Stingel, the most conceptual book you will ever read – on DIY – which was published to coincide with his first exhibition in 1989 at the Massimo de Carlo Gallery. It’s genius.

People often ask me how to start a collection. I tell them, start with books and learn – start with paper! But you must also have passion. There is a quote by Robert Filliou that sums up why Laurence and I have dedicated our lives to collecting. He said: “Art is what makes life better than art.” That’s our philosophy.

*A Passion For Jean Prouvé: From Furniture to Architecture is published in April by [Galerie Patrick Seguin](#) at €190*