

PRESS RELEASE
19 September 2017

JEAN PROUVÉ: ARCHITECT FOR BETTER DAYS

On view: October 20, 2017 – Spring 2018
Opening: Friday, October 20, 2017
La Grande Halle, Parc des Ateliers, Arles, France

As part of its guest program, the LUMA Foundation, together with Paris-based Galerie Patrick Seguin, is pleased to announce *JEAN PROUVÉ: Architect for Better Days*, a major survey exhibition devoted to the innovative twentieth-century French designer of furniture and architecture. Comprising twelve prefabricated buildings created between 1939 and 1969, this exhibition features the largest number of Prouvé's demountable construction systems ever assembled in a single location, and aims to revisit the functional side of his architecture, a focus that is as timely and relevant as ever in light of today's housing and migratory crisis.

Following the installation of four houses at the Parc des Ateliers in Arles in May, the full exhibition opens October 20, 2017 and runs through spring 2018. That the structures are installed within and in close proximity to La Grande Halle – an exhibition venue wrought from a nineteenth-century foundry—is a fitting tribute to Prouvé's training as an artisan metalworker.

Jean Prouvé (1901-1984), regarded today as one of the most enduring and important figures of twentieth-century design, approached the construction of furniture in the same way he constructed a house. In order to describe this balance of material integrity, innovative and economical construction, and elemental design, Le Corbusier designated Prouvé a *constructeur*. At once an architect and an engineer, the term encompasses the singularity of Prouvé's elegant approach as well as his vital social motivation, manufacturing "brilliant solutions" for the modern era's most urgent needs. Though Prouvé is today synonymous with the bent sheet-steel frames of his now-iconic furniture, his seminal contributions to modern architecture and his socially engaged praxis as *constructeur*—united the realms of industry, architecture, engineering and design—deserve far more attention than they have historically been afforded.

Prouvé's social consciousness in design was forged at a young age, inherently tied to his conception and production of craft. He privileged collaboration, the integrity of material processes, and the ethical applications of industrial technologies across the five decades of his career. Early on, Prouvé's experimental use of materials (specifically

steel and, later, aluminum) led to collaborations with Robert Mallet-Stevens, and, with Pierre Jeanneret, Le Corbusier, and Charlotte Perriand, he became a founding member of UAM (1929).

Acutely aware of the shifting social and political landscape of his time, Prouvé adapted his construction system to the exigencies of his historical moment. His metal building systems used economical but durable construction materials that could easily be assembled, dismantled, transported, and modified. In the 1930s, Prouvé began to create prototypes and secure patents for portable building systems, or “demountable” houses.

The iterations featured in *JEAN PROUVÉ: Architect for Better Days* – including the small series of portable homes Prouvé produced in the late 1930s, prefabricated pressed steel and wood military barracks, temporary accommodations for refugees, and his final demountable prototype created for Ferembal, an industrial packing company near Nancy (1948)– each attest to the development and modification of the structures designed by Prouvé according to the demands of their time.

As he adapted his prefabricated systems to both civilian and military use, Prouvé was praised during the Second World War for his audacious designs, innovative construction techniques, economic yet quality use of materials, and combination of scientific and humanist design principles. Following his support of the French Resistance during the war, Prouvé was appointed interim mayor of Nancy in 1944, and later honored by the Ministry of Reconstruction and Urbanism for his contributions to reconstruction efforts (1947).

After relocating his workshop to Maxéville, in the outskirts of Nancy in 1947, Prouvé undertook his most concerted efforts to produce prefabricated housing units on a mass scale. Still Prouvé remained committed to meeting the needs of different segments of society after the war, especially to the improvement of housing, schools, and other domestic infrastructure. The simple harmony and structural core of Prouvé’s “La Maison Les Jours Meilleurs” (1956), commissioned by Emmaeus founder Abbé Pierre, perhaps best exemplifies Prouvé’s lifelong commitment to the application of industrialized architecture to social need.

Though Prouvé aimed to produce houses on the scale of Citroën’s production of cars, the vast majority of his prefabricated building prototypes were never widely adopted during his lifetime. Nevertheless, the exhibition testifies to the abiding power of Prouvé’s architectural systems among subsequent generations of architects.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a survey publication produced by the LUMA Foundation in collaboration with Phaidon Press. The book features two newly commissioned essays by architect, critic, theorist and Dean Emeritus of Columbia University’s Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, Prof. Mark Wigley, and Philippe Trétiack, a Paris-based architecture critic and author, and includes a wealth of historical and archival material on the twelve constructions exhibited at LUMA Arles, and Prouvé’s oeuvre in general.

Educational activities for middle-school, high-school and university students and families, and workshops for children will be held in tandem with the exhibition. More information will be released on our website www.luma-arles.org.

For press information please contact:

LUMA Arles
Pierre Collet, Imagine
pcollet@luma-arles.org
+33(0)6 80 84 87 71

LUMA Foundation
Sandra Roemermann
s.roemermann@lumafoundation.org
+44(0)20 3219 7806

Galerie Patrick Seguin
Lucy Keohane
lucy@patricksequin.com
+33 (0) 1 47 00 32 35

NOTES TO EDITORS

About LUMA Foundation and LUMA Arles

In 2004, Maja Hoffmann created the LUMA Foundation in Switzerland to support the activities of artists, independent pioneers, and organizations working in the visual arts, photography, publishing, documentary filmmaking, and multimedia. Envisioned as a production tool for Hoffmann's multi-faceted ventures, the LUMA Foundation produces, supports, and enables challenging art projects committed to an expansive understanding of environmental issues, human rights, education, and culture.

In 2013, Hoffmann launched LUMA Arles to plan, develop, and manage the Parc des Ateliers, an expansive former industrial site located in Arles, France. Situated adjacent to the city's UNESCO World Heritage sites, the Parc des Ateliers serves as the major programmatic and cultural center for LUMA Foundation's diverse activities.

LUMA Arles includes a resource center designed by architect Frank Gehry; various industrial buildings rehabilitated by Selldorf Architects; and a public park designed by landscape architect Bas Smets. In anticipation of its completion, the site's main building designed by Gehry will open in spring 2019, Hoffmann works closely with the LUMA Arles Core Group (Tom Eccles, Liam Gillick, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Philippe Parreno, and Beatrix Ruf) on a program of exhibitions and multidisciplinary projects presented each year in the site's newly rehabilitated venues of the Grande Halle, Les Forges, and the Mécanique Générale.

Recent projects produced by the LUMA Foundation for LUMA Arles at Parc des Ateliers in Arles include: *Annie Leibovitz – The Early Years: 1970-1983*, the inaugural exhibition of the foundation's Living Archive Program; a series of ongoing collaborations with several artists launched six years ago, that integrates diverse forms of artistic production, film, and dance: *Systematically Open: New Forms for Contemporary Image Production* (2016); *Imponderable: The Archives of Tony Oursler* (2015); *Frank Gehry: Solaris Chronicles* (2014); Wolfgang Tillmans: *Neue Welt* (2013); *To the Moon via the Beach* (2012); *Doug Aitken: Altered Earth* (2012); *How Soon is Now* (2010) and the symposia *Curating after the Global: Roadmaps for the Present* (2017); *How Institutions Think* (2016); *The Flood of Rights* (2013) and *The Human Snapshot* (2011).

Each year, LUMA Arles also hosts a guest program at the Parc des Ateliers, which includes among others, the international photography festival Les Rencontres d'Arles and the music festival Les Suds.

About Galerie Patrick Seguin

Founded in 1989, Galerie Patrick Seguin is located in the district of Bastille in Paris in a space renovated by Jean Nouvel, and in a newly opened second venue in London. Since its opening, the gallery has brought the talents of major French designers such as Jean Prouvé, Charlotte Perriand, Pierre Jeanneret, Le Corbusier and Jean Royère into the international spotlight.

With a particular specialization in the work of Jean Prouvé, the gallery works rigorously to promote both his furniture as well as his demountable houses, and has gathered the most important collection of these assembled constructions, which for the most part are either unique editions or were produced in very few numbers.

The quality of the works selected by Patrick Seguin combined with his meticulous and informative presentations has resulted in unique exhibitions at the Centre Georges Pompidou and the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Venice Biennale, and the Musée des Beaux Arts in Nancy, France.

The gallery has also published an extensive series of monographic books and produced numerous stop motion videos, filmed in multiple locations, documenting the assembly and dismantling of each of the constructions by Jean Prouvé from its collection.