



Excerpt from PIÈCES-MEUBLÉS 1995 / 2016 exhibition catalogue by Bob Nickas

Galerie Patrick Seguin, Paris France

In deciding to mark the 20th anniversary of *Pièces — Meublés*, it was clear that a new show would be more ambitious, focused and definitive. As pleased as we were with what had been done in 1995, the original show was more a collection of pieces than a fully orchestrated ensemble meant to create a larger puzzle. In the twenty-plus years that have passed, Patrick Seguin has on a number of occasions built and exhibited the demountable houses and structures that were designed by Prouvé between 1944 and 1950. Conceived with prefabricated elements, easily assembled and disassembled, they proved that good design could be practical and economically viable, yet without any lack of innovation, and that even ‘industrial’ architecture could be warm, inviting, beautiful, and, in the case of his school buildings in particular, aspirational — a lasting achievement. For this anniversary

exhibition, we decided to offer Prouvé furniture to the invited artists, and to have one of his houses built in the gallery, furnished with art and seemingly inhabited. In addition a Richard Artschwager table, a David Adamo radiator, and a photo imprinted curtain by Walead Beshty inside, there was a female mannequin by John Miller, who appeared as the 'lady of the house.' Two of its original panels were replaced with a 'brick wall' painting by Kelley Walker, a double-sided diptych fabricated in association with the architect William Haskas, created to function as part of its exterior and interior skin. The painting was not hung on a gallery wall, but would become part of the house's structure, its 'mortar' comprised, appropriately enough, of collaged Prouvé images. Outside, in front of the house, one of Albert Oehlens's abstract tree paintings was hung, while behind there was a small garden of bamboo sculptures by Elaine Cameron-Weir. And so the Prouvé house created a stage-set for the exhibition, in and around which, artworks — and visitors — would move. IN this mise-en-scène, due to the fact that not all the wall panels were in place, and that the roof was left open, inside and outside were allowed to intermingle. This openness emphasized the organic nature of an architecture meant for the landscape, even in spite of its construction within an enclosed space, a gallery interior.

In considering the Prouvé pieces that were chosen by the artists, we learn something about their eye and their sensibilities. Nathaniel Axel chose a daybed on which to place an 'erotic box,' with one his ghostly etched book covers hung behind, identifying the bed as a site of seduction overseen by the spirit of Alain Robbe-Grillet. The *vestiaire* selected by Carol Bove, an artist for whom the activity of collection and arrangement is important, was meant as the setting for a sculpture whose elements may be imagined as placed inside and on its shelves, or as having just been removed. In choosing Prouvé's Bergère lecture hall chair from 1951, Alex Da Corte reveals his attraction to objects from which a sense of fetishistic, perverse figuration and narrative may be derived. Ryan Foerster's printing plates have a material correspondence with the aluminum used by Prouvé, not only alongside the building panel that serves as their window, but which prominently appears in the poster he designed and had printed for the show. The highly-keyed retinal painting by David Malek echoes the sort of ancient wooden doors one regularly encountered in France prior to the modernization exemplified by Prouvé's forward thinking, a past that Malek re-imagines as a portal to the future. Adam McEwen's re-engineering of a classic demountable chair, seemingly skewered by one of its aluminum tubes, amplifies its structural design and transforms it from a place of rest to an object of contemplation. In also rendering his intervention as a sponge painting, McEwen overlays the 'armchair' of Matisse and the famous advice of Jasper Johns: "Take an object. Do something to it. Do something else to it." Virginia Overton's selection of Prouvé's swing-jib lamp of 1951 illuminates, both literally and figuratively her own work with lighting fixtures, lightboxes and LED technology. Mai-Thu Perret's ceramics, including a dark head and hand emerge from the African Kambala wood of a round Guéridon table. The opticality that sinuously animates Nicolas Roggy's painting can be seen to play off the wave form, the *onde*, in the fixed-blade sun

shutter originally designed for schools in Cameroon in 1964. Andra Ursuta's 'butt stool' cast from the artist's own body, joins a pair of the designer's stools produced in the early '50's whose pressed aluminum seats conform to the contours of the seated human body. In this grouping of the stools by Prouvé and Ursuta there is an interplay of positive and negative space, present and absent bodies. John M Armleder, one of the artists who participated in the original show, created a work that places side-by-side a new painting of his and a Prouvé panel with porthole windows, drawing a parallel to the space between the readymade geometry and everyday found objects that he has explored throughout his career.