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# GALLERY GUIDE

## Pierre Chareau

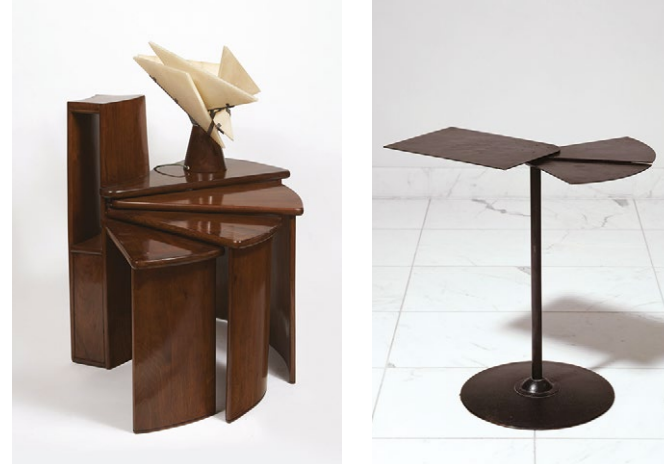
Modern  
Architecture  
and Design

November 4, 2016 – March 26, 2017



Pierre Chareau (1883 – 1950), the French designer and architect, established himself at the intersection of tradition and innovation, balancing the opulence of the French decorative arts with the clean lines and industrial materials of modernism.

A companion to the exhibition, this guide provides a closer look at Chareau's diverse outputs and inspirations that made him a major figure in 20th-century design.



## THE DESIGNER

Pierre Chareau was trained in an era that prized high-quality craftsmanship, and his furniture was known for its spare lines and the beauty of its surfaces – veneered in precious woods such as macassar ebony, burl amboyna, and rosewood. Exquisite details in wrought iron, with occasional touches of exotic materials such as sharkskin or ivory, took the place of ornamentation.

Chareau balanced this love of artisanal work and rare materials with the requirements of modernity. Desks,

vanities, and nesting tables had movable components that pivoted to accommodate the shifting needs of his clients, reflecting the mobility of modern life.

The Great Depression in 1929 put an end to the existing market for high-end furniture, and Chareau began simplifying his designs, rejecting luxurious materials, and working with reproducible models, although he was never able to work for industry or achieve mass production.



## MAISON DE VERRE

Chareau was never trained as an architect, but architecture remained his great ambition. His uncontested masterpiece is the Maison de Verre, or the Glass House, built in Paris (1928–32) in collaboration with the Dutch architect Bernard Bijvoet and the ironsmith Louis Dalbet. Commissioned by Chareau's patrons and close friends, Annie and Jean Dalsace, it was daring in its use of exposed industrial materials.

Its facades, front and back, were made entirely of translucent and transparent glass, unusual for the time. In the grand salon, I-beams, partly highlighted in red, and industrial rubber tiles coexisted both with devices in wrought iron and Chareau's custom-made furniture in rare woods. The house became an icon of modern architecture, and a meeting place for artists, musicians, writers, and intellectuals.



## HERITAGE AND IDENTITY

Both Chareau and his British wife, Dollie, were of Sephardic descent and their lives serve as a prism through which one can see the destruction of a particularly prominent community of France's assimilated Jews during World War II. After the Germans occupied Paris in 1940, Chareau left for Morocco and from there, via Lisbon, sailed for the United States. Dollie, at great personal risk, stayed behind to dispose of their belongings and raise money for their life in exile.

Many of his Jewish clients were also forced into exile or lost in the Holocaust – their possessions, including pieces by Chareau, scattered, hidden, or confiscated by German occupiers.

Although the Chareaus were reunited in New York, life as they knew it had been shattered. Chareau was reduced to odd jobs, Dollie taught French and did occasional translations; many pieces from their art collection had to be sold to museums or auction houses.



## CHAREAU IN AMERICA

A highlight of Chareau's American exile was his close friendship with the artist Robert Motherwell, who in 1945 commissioned a house and studio from him in East Hampton, Long Island. Motherwell's house, like the Maison de Verre, saw its share of avant-garde artists, including Jackson Pollock, Lee Krasner, Mark Rothko, and Willem de Kooning.

Chareau himself built a tiny summer cottage on Motherwell's property and served as an editor of a short-lived magazine titled *possibilities*, together with Motherwell, Harold Rosenberg, and John Cage. The Chareaus owned several works by Motherwell, almost all of which are on display in this exhibition. Chareau's house for Motherwell was destroyed in 1985.

## PUBLIC PROGRAMS EXPLORING THE EXHIBITION

### GALLERY TALKS

Discussions led by Museum educators.

#### Interior Innovations

Fridays, November 18, February 10 and 24, and March 10, 2 pm

#### Collecting Modern Art

Fridays, December 9, February 17, March 3 and 17, 2 pm

Free with Museum Admission

### LECTURE:

#### PIERRE CHAREAU'S MAISON DE VERRE

The Saul and Harriet M. Rothkopf Media Program  
Thursday, November 17, 6:30 pm

Kenneth Frampton, The Ware Professor of Architecture, Columbia University, GSAPP, gives insight into the Maison de Verre, the signature building in Paris designed by Pierre Chareau and Bernard Bijvoet.

This program has been funded by a generous donation endowment from the Saul and Harriet M. Rothkopf Family Foundation.

Tickets: \$15 General; \$12 Students and Seniors; \$10 Members

### DIALOGUE AND DISCOURSE

#### Dakota Jackson in Conversation

Thursday, March 2, 6:30 pm

The furniture designer discusses his influences and involvement in the American Art Furniture Movement.

Tickets: \$15 General; \$12 Students and Seniors; \$10 Members

### BANG ON A CAN PRESENTS: BONJOUR

Thursday, February 16, 7:30 pm

Founded by bassist and composer Florent Ghys, Bonjour combines cello, guitar, percussion, and vocals to create an unusual and edgy sound beyond the arena of "new classical" music.

Tickets: \$18 General; \$15 Students and Seniors; \$12 Jewish Museum and Bang on a Can Members

### ADULT STUDIO WORKSHOP: DESIGN IMPRESSIONS

For dates and more information, visit [TheJewishMuseum.org/StudioWorkshops](http://TheJewishMuseum.org/StudioWorkshops).

Inspired by the architecture and furniture designs in this exhibition, class participants translate Chareau's modern vision of integrated spatial and decorative forms into mixed-media works on paper.

Course Fee: \$100 Members; \$120 General

All materials included.



5th Ave at 92nd St, NYC  
TheJewishMuseum.org  
Under the auspices of The  
Jewish Theological Seminary

**Pierre Chareau: Modern Architecture and Design** is organized by the Jewish Museum in collaboration with The Centre Pompidou.  
The exhibition is designed by Diller Scofidio + Renfro.

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Additional support is provided by Lorraine and Martin Beitler and through public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.



**Cover:** Pierre Chareau and Bernard Bijvoet, Maison de Verre, 1928 – 1932. Photograph © Mark Lyon. | The Maison de Verre. Photograph © Mark Lyon. **Page 1:** Wall Cabinet (MA373) (detail), c. 1928, designed by Pierre Chareau. Vallois America, New York. Photograph by Ken Collins. **Page 2:** Telephone table (MB152) and *Religieuse* table lamp, c. 1924, designed by Pierre Chareau. Collection Dominique Suisse. | Propeller table (SN9), 1929, designed by Pierre Chareau. Courtesy of Galerie Karsten Greve, Paris/Corbeille sofa (MP169), 1923, designed by Pierre Chareau with upholstery designed by Jean Lurçat. Collection of Audrey Friedman and Haim Manishevitz, Primavera Gallery. **Page 3:** Pierre Chareau and Bernard

Bijvoet, Maison de Verre, 1928 – 1932. Photograph © Mark Lyon. | The Maison de Verre. Photograph © Yukio Futagawa / GA Photographers. **Page 4:** Pierre Chareau in his Paris apartment, c. 1927. On the wall behind him are works by Picasso and Lipchitz. Photograph by Thérèse Bonney, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Architecture & Design Study Center, ADD 1117. Photograph by Thérèse Bonney, image provided by The Museum of Modern Art / SCALA / Art Resource, New York. | Chana Orloff, Bust of Pierre Chareau, plaster, 1921, Ateliers Chana Orloff. **Page 5:** Interior view of the house that Pierre Chareau designed for Robert Motherwell in East Hampton, New York.

