

**MoMA PRESENTS AN EXHIBITION DEVOTED TO THE ATELIERS OF  
FRENCH DESIGNER JEAN PROUVÉ**

***Ateliers Jean Prouvé***

**The Philip Johnson Architecture and Design Galleries, third floor**

**April 25, 2008—March 31, 2009**

**NEW YORK, April 25, 2008**—The Museum of Modern Art presents ***Ateliers Jean Prouvé***, an exhibition that provides a historical view of workshop mass production as practiced by the French architect and designer Jean Prouvé (1901–84), and of the collaborations within his ateliers that took designs for furniture and architecture from ideas to industrialized products. The exhibition comprises approximately 20 pieces, including important loans and works from the Museum's collection, accompanied by documents and photographs of Prouvé's work. The exhibition focuses on the evolution of his "Standard" Chair in order to demonstrate Prouvé's unique approach to construction and his sensitive handling of materials.

*Ateliers Jean Prouvé* is organized by Christian Larsen, Curatorial Assistant, Research and Collections, Department of Architecture and Design, The Museum of Modern Art, with Max Risselada, Professor at the Faculty of Architecture, Delft University of Technology, the Netherlands.

Equipped with a skilled creative team and the most advanced manufacturing technologies available at the time, the Ateliers Jean Prouvé were laboratories where ideas were continuously refined and adapted to produce furnishings and prefabricated buildings on an industrial scale. Many of the works on display in *Ateliers Jean Prouvé* originated in Prouvé's first workshop in Nancy, France (1931–46) or in those he established nearby at Maxéville in 1947. The Ateliers functioned as a collective, organized into departments specialized in certain phases of the work. As the Ateliers became increasingly industrialized, they filled large orders of many thousands of units for schools, cafeterias, hospitals, and commercial and government offices. They solicited business for both the commercial and domestic markets through advertisements in magazines and through their catalogs, examples of which are included in the exhibition.

The exhibition focuses on Prouvé's design and development of his "Standard" Chair, first designed in 1935 and developed for production during the 1950s. These chairs relied on the frame as a main structure, with forces of resistance concentrated in a central node. Prouvé wanted the user to be able to lean back on the rear feet without weakening any of the chair's joints. He cut and bent sheet metal into the fin-shaped tapered section of the rear legs to disperse stress uniformly through the chair's legs and back, then applied the seat and back onto this supportive structure. Several variations of this chair are on display, illustrating the evolution of

the design elements. The different designs and materials also demonstrate the chair's adaptability to particular situations, such as the increased use of wood in response to metal shortages during World War II, the increased use of aluminum after the War, and design modifications such as knock-down assembly that made for easier shipping.

Another important work featured in the exhibition is the Maison de la Tunisie Bench-Bookshelf (1952), a multi-use storage element commissioned to furnish student dormitories at the Université de Paris. It was the result of intensive collaborations between Charlotte Perriand and Prouvé; Robert Delauney and Nicolas Schöffer contributed the color scheme. Its modular system was conceived for utmost flexibility in furnishing configurations and was later developed for the consumer market.

Other works in the exhibition, such as the Reclining Armchair (1930) and Nursery School Chair (1934) are among Prouvé's earliest designs; he later revised and produced them in the 1970s in cooperation with the furniture manufacturer Axel Bruchhauser, of the German firm TECTA. Comfort was Prouvé's foremost concern in designing the Reclining Armchair, in which a spring element allows the user to recline comfortably into a range of seating positions. The Nursery School Chair, first sketched in 1934 and later developed with TECTA, utilizes *tube aplati*—a flattened metal tube developed by Prouvé to provide a stronger, more rigid structure than the perfectly circular, hollow tubular steel so frequently used in furniture of the 1920s and 1930s. Many other objects from TECTA's design collection are included in this presentation with Axel Bruchhauser's generosity.

An avid follower of aeronautical engineering, Prouvé imagined that entire buildings could be industrialized in much the same way as airplanes and automobiles. Façade Panel for Fédération du Bâtiment, Paris, France (1949–50), an aluminum and glass facade panel designed for the National Building Federation in Paris, demonstrates Prouvé's interest in prefabrication. Rescued from the site after the building was demolished, it shows the advantages these standardized façade panels provided over traditional on-site construction: strong yet lighter than traditional building materials, they provided integrated glazing, ventilation, and wiring for electricity and telephones, thus speeding construction time and requiring less labor.

In addition to this installation, a selection of models, drawings, and building fragments related to Prouvé's prefabricated housing will be on display on the sixth floor in the exhibition *Home Delivery: Fabricating the Modern Dwelling* from July 20 to October 20, 2008.

**Please Note:** The exhibition will be closed from June 2 to June 17 for gallery maintenance.

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