



Exhibition
Joseph Savina (1901 - 1983)
L'avant-garde bretonne

Thursday, February 8th to Saturday, March 2nd, 2024
Press breakfast on February 8, 2024, from 9am to 12pm
Opening on February 8, 2024, 6pm to 8pm

18, rue de Seine, 75006 Paris

Laffanour/ Galerie Downtown Paris is pleased to announce the exhibition, Joseph Savina, *L'avant-garde bretonne*. This is the first monographic exhibition dedicated to Joseph Savina's carved wood furniture, the gallery will also highlight the artist's collaboration and friendship with the father of modern architecture, Le Corbusier.

Guided by his curiosity and instinct for discovery, through his ongoing study of Le Corbusier's work, François Laffanour discovered the work of Joseph Savina. This interest, coupled with an attachment to Brittany, quickly developed into a new passion for an artist, designer and cabinetmaker, whose work he gradually assembled into a collection suitable for an exhibition.

One of the gallery's virtuous ambitions is to rediscover talents and bring to light the little-known artists of past generations. This exhibition is a veritable voyage through modernist Brittany, a multi-faceted melting pot of culture at the intersection of marine, Christian, Celtic and even vernacular influences of the 20th century, guided by one of the most talented artists of this generation of avant-garde artists. Joseph Savina embodies this spirit of modernity, making his claim to Breton folk art while preserving and enhancing tradition and craftsmanship in his creations.



Joseph Savina (1901 - 1983)
Cupboard, 1961
Carved and polychromed oak, brass escutcheons and frames
Signed "J. Savina"
H. 64.17 x W. 70.07 x D. 20.07 in.



Joseph Savina (1901 - 1983)
Set of 8 wooden chairs, Ca. 1950
Beech frame, carved back, seat covered in camel leather
H. 33.07 x W. 16.99 x D. 18.50 in.



Joseph Savina (1901 - 1983)
Cabinet, Ca. 1929-1931
Wooden cabinet decorated with triangular metal plates
H. 63 x W. 63 x D. 19.68 in.

Joseph Savina is an emblematic figure of this Breton avant-garde movement. Born in Douarnenez in 1901 into a family of cabinetmakers, he grew up in contact with wood and sculpture, honing his skills alongside carpenter and sculptor Jean Le Picard. Named « French craftsman of the year » in 1929, he opened his own workshop on rue Saint-André in Tréguier. There, he combined meticulous craftsmanship with the new spirit of design, while remaining an ardent defender of Breton art. He rejects overly conventional decorative details, preferring to highlight the construction lines of his furniture. His output was prolific, and he was soon described as a « wood embroiderer ».

Before his pivotal encounter with Le Corbusier, Joseph Savina rubbed shoulders with a group of artists known as the Seiz Breur (Seven Brothers), which gave him new inspiration. Founded in 1923 by engraver and decorator Jeanne Malivel, this avant-garde movement rejected the decorative picturesqueness of local artistic production. Bringing together craftsmen and artists from different fields, the Seiz Breur advocated, among other things, the creation of furniture adapted to contemporary needs. This desire was reflected by Joseph Savina, who, following in the footsteps of Jeanne Malivel, designed furniture capable of embodying this new identity. One of his sideboards from the '30s, for example, is directly inspired by the work of Jeanne Malivel and René-Yves Creton: a schematized, stylized decor, which he used to create his monogram. Savina also wanted to offer a wide variety of decorative ornaments, which would gradually become the vocabulary used in her vast creations: palmettes, volutes, lozenges, fish, interlacing kelp, etc.



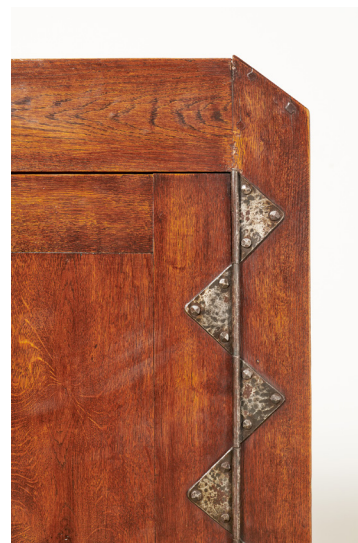
Joseph Savina (1901 – 1983)
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Carved and polychromed oak, brass escutcheons and frames
Signed "J. Savina"
H. 64.17 x W. 70.07 x D. 20.07 in.



Joseph Savina (1901 – 1983)
Pair of armchairs, Ca. 1947
Oak, straw-upholstered seat joined by two armrests.
A removable back in carved wood with geometric motifs
H. 35.82 x W. 24.40 x D. 26.22 in.



Joseph Savina (1901 – 1983)
Set of 6 wooden chairs,
Wooden frame, carved back, brown leather-covered seat
H. 37 x W. 16.53 x D. 16.14 in.



Joseph Savina (1901 – 1983)
Cabinet, Ca. 1929-1931
Wooden cabinet decorated with triangular metal plates
H. 63 x W. 63 x D. 19.68 in.

Collaboration with Le Corbusier

Savina and Le Corbusier met in 1935 and, despite their almost opposite backgrounds, struck up an astonishing friendship. For Joseph Savina, Le Corbusier became the embodiment of this new modern spirit. Numerous letters testify to the genesis of their joint production, with the cabinetmaker asserting that «the plastic work is the basis of the architectural work». Joseph Savina took a passionate interest in Le Corbusier's architectural innovations, attempting to parallel the principles of the architect and designer with his vision of Breton art, without ever fearing a strange juxtaposition.



Le Corbusier
Ozon Opus 1, 1947
Polychrome wood
Monogrammed and dated at the bottom at the back:
"L-C. JS 47 / 2/5"
H. 29,1 x L. 18,5 x W. 15 in.

Despite the Second World War, their relationship intensified, and in 1940, they resumed the exchange of letters that was to initiate their collaboration and joint creation.

In May 1943, Joseph Savina's workshop reopened, and the cabinetmaker wrote to his friend with some of his latest creations, to which the architect replied: « *As for Savina, I find it amazing, exceeding my expectations* ». These lines - relating to the *Ozon* sculpture, Opus 1 - underline a true communion between the two men. Le Corbusier wrote to him: « *Courage Savina! You're full of talent ! It's a pleasure to work with you !* » It was from a gouache sent to Le Corbusier in gratitude for the supplies he provided to the architect, in the middle of the post-war period, that Joseph Savina conceived this shape in wood. The initials J.S - L.C then appeared on the sculptures. In 1953, Le Corbusier commissioned Savina to create the entrance door, cross, high altar and benches for the Chapelle Notre-Dame-du-Haut in Ronchamp. Their collaboration lasted until the architect's death in 1965.

Joseph Savina's works are now part of Breton museum collections (Museum of Brittany - Rennes, Musée départemental breton de Quimper...), as well as private collections in France and in the USA (Miami).

ABOUT DOWNTOWN GALLERY



François Laffanour © DePasquale+Maffini

Since it opened in the early 1980s, Galerie Downtown, founded by François Laffanour, has been exploring and exhibiting the furniture of 20th-century architects, helping to rehabilitate and promote the masters of post-war architecture.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, designers and architects brought a new conception to the art of furnishing, dictated by a need for freedom and efficiency, in the service of a new art of living in an era of technological and scientific, but also sociological, demographic and social development.

Galerie Downtown also holds the archives of Galerie Steph Simon, which from 1956 to 1974 represented and edited furniture by Charlotte Perriand, Jean Prouvé, Serge Mouille, Georges Jouve and Isamu Noguchi.

