



FONDATION
C A B

“Jean Prouvé - Inventeur de maisons”

From March 14 to October 31, 2026

FONDATION CAB

5766, chemin des Trious
Saint Paul de Vence

PRESS RELEASE
MARCH 2026

Jean Prouvé (1901–1984)
“Air France, Brazzaville” brise-soleil
Circa 1951
Rectangular structure in folded sheet steel,
lacquered green, with ribbed aluminum slats.
Dimensions:
H. 151 × W. 156 × D. 15 cm
Provenance:
Created for the interior fittings of the
Air France building in Brazzaville, circa 1951.

On the occasion of the exhibition “Jean Prouvé: Inventor of Houses”, Laffanour | Galerie Downtown and the CAB Foundation present an exceptional selection of works that testify to the multifaceted genius of one of the most influential creators of the 20th century. Architect and designer, Jean Prouvé redefined the relationship between structure, function, and form, advancing a modern vision in which every element from furniture to buildings follows the same rigorous and poetic constructive logic.

The CAB Foundation in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, an architectural gem of the 1950s entirely renovated by Charles Zana in 2021, provides an ideal setting to explore this prolific body of work. The exhibition aligns with the Foundation’s dual mission: to create a dialogue between minimal and conceptual art and the history of French design, while offering visitors an immersive experience punctuated by architectural elements, iconic objects, and references to the domestic environment.

At the heart of the exhibition, Jean Prouvé’s research for the “Coque” and “Métropole” houses in Meudon embodies the culmination of his prefabrication philosophy. Confronted with the postwar housing crisis, he devised innovative structural solutions, axial portal frames, self-supporting panels, curved steel shells that combine lightness, rapid assembly, and enduring modernity. In every detail, Jean Prouvé reveals his social commitment: to make architecture accessible, functional, and formally ambitious.



Jean Prouvé (1901–1984)
“Meudon” glazed door
Circa 1952
Glazed entrance door in folded
steel with glass.
Dimensions:
H. 240 × W. 93 × D. 9 cm
Provenance:
“Maison Métropole,” Meudon, France.



Jean Prouvé (1901–1984)
“Standard” demountable chair
Circa 1950
Wood and enameled steel, tinted orange.
Dimensions:
H. 81 × W. 49 × D. 41.5 cm

The presentation curated by the gallery also highlights his emblematic furniture designs, in which structural innovation engages in dialogue with everyday life. The Cité bed, designed for the university residence in Nancy, exemplifies an approach in which function determines form. The Compas table, the Standard chair, the Antony armchair, and the Marcoule bench embody his pursuit of economy of means, material strength, and formal purity hallmarks of his work. Architectural elements such as doors from the Maison Métropole and brise-soleil panels for the Air France building in Brazzaville extend this reflection, revealing the intrinsic continuity between furniture and architecture.

More than seventy years after their creation, these pieces retain a striking modernity. The exhibition underscores Jean Prouvé’s unique contribution to France and to the history of design: that of an inventor capable of transforming technical constraints into poetic forms, of uniting constructive ingenuity, social vision, and formal elegance, and of securing a lasting place for his creations in the collective memory of modern architecture.



Jean Prouvé (1901–1984)
“Marcoule” bench
Circa 1956
Blue lacquered metal, oak.
Dimensions:
H. 75 × W. 148 × D. 44 cm
Provenance:
Buildings of the Marcoule industrial site
(Atomic Research Centers).

The Cité bed, designed by Jean Prouvé, is among the most emblematic models produced by the Ateliers Jean Prouvé. Conceived for the competition to furnish the student residence in Nancy, it responded to a precise functional brief that notably included an integrated bedside table.

Prouvé chose an entirely folded sheet-steel structure, composed of two longitudinal beams connecting headboard and footboard panels shaped like open box forms that house wooden shelves. The headboard, deliberately asymmetrical and wider than the footboard, features a drawer and is complemented by an intermediate shelf a solution that remained unchanged until production ended in 1953.

Manufactured in around sixty examples for the university residence, the model was subsequently reworked for commercial distribution around 1935. Relunched after the war for the domestic market, the Cité bed was offered from 1949 in two widths that could be paired together, and later adapted into a double version. Produced until 1953 before being replaced by the more economical SCAL bed this typology perfectly illustrates Prouvé's approach, in which structural rigor, constructive rationality, and functional elegance combine with striking modernity.



Jean Prouvé (1901–1984)
“Cité” bed
Circa 1950
Folded enameled sheet steel, solid
oak shelves, wooden feet.
Dimensions:
H. 51 × W. 215 × D. 85 cm

The “Compas” table, designed by Jean Prouvé in 1953, represents the last structural type applied to furniture invented by the designer and remains one of his most emblematic creations. Often associated with the “Standard” chair, it reflects an advanced pursuit of constructive efficiency and formal clarity.

Its refined base rests on tapered legs in folded sheet steel with a triangular section, assembled in pairs and welded to a central crossbar. Triangular brackets support the tabletop while concealing the assembly points. The table adopts a symmetrical structure capable of accommodating tops in various dimensions and materials solid wood, plywood, laminate, plastic, or Bulgomme depending on domestic or collective use.

Widely distributed for furnishing university restaurants and cafeterias, the table was produced at the Maxéville factory until 1959 and marketed by Steph Simon, with tabletops manufactured by the company Negroni. It fully embodies Jean Prouvé’s approach, grounded in structural rationality, adaptability, and an industrial aesthetic that has since become iconic.



Jean Prouvé (1901–1984)
“Compas” table
Circa 1953
Structure in folded sheet steel lacquered
lemon yellow, rectangular grey Formica
top edged with red Formica.
Dimensions:
H. 80 × W. 180 × D. 71 cm

The Houses of Meudon: Jean Prouvé's Pragmatic Legacy

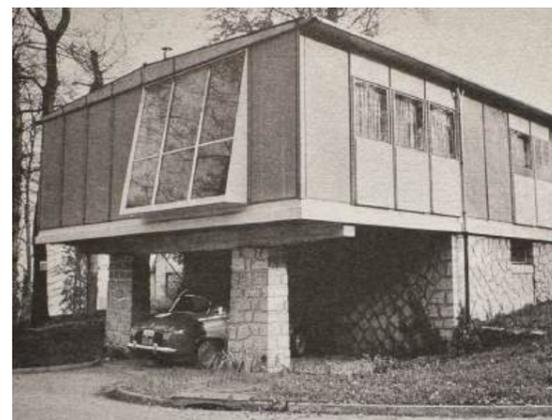
In the early 1950s, Jean Prouvé revolutionized modern architecture through his innovative approach to prefabrication and the use of industrial materials. This vision took shape in Meudon with the “Coque” and “Métropole” houses, a major project conceived to address the postwar housing crisis by providing affordable, rapidly produced, and easily reproducible homes.

The Métropole houses, the culmination of research begun in 1938, are distinguished by their axial portal frame a slender steel structure supporting a transverse beam that carries the roof. Derived from Prouvé's mastery of metal folding, this technique made it possible to create constructions that were both lightweight and rigid, reinforced by steel-aluminum panels and self-supporting façades ensuring stability and durability.

First presented at the 1951 Salon des Arts Ménagers, the Coque houses illustrate an equally remarkable structural radicalism: self-supporting curved steel shells simultaneously form both structure and envelope, replacing walls, roof, and ceiling with a single prefabricated element. Of modest dimensions (5 × 10 m or 6 × 12 m), the versions built in Meudon were partially adapted with stone gables and manufactured panels, while preserving the essence of the original concept. Developed in collaboration with architect André Sive and supported by Eugène Claudius-Petit, the project embodies Prouvé's pragmatism: each component was factory-produced to optimize cost, time, and quality. Nearly seventy-five years later, the houses of Meudon remain a benchmark in industrialized housing, where structural efficiency and aesthetic rigor converge in a modernity that continues to inspire.



© Maison Coque. (ADMM)
© Coque House. (ADMM)

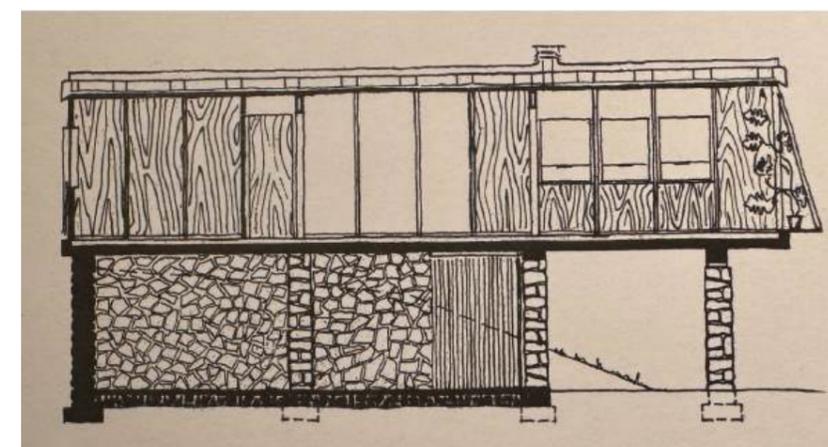


© Maison Métropole. Panneaux de façade en aluminium. (ADMM)
© Métropole House. Aluminium facade panels. (ADMM)



CHANTIER D'EXPERIENCES A MEUDON
ANDRE SIVE ET HENRI PROUVE, ARCHITECTES
JEAN PROUVE, CONSTRUCTEUR

© L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui magazine, 1951
© L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui magazine, 1951



© Coupe longitudinale sur une maison à portique (D.R)
© Longitudinal view of a porticoed house (R.R)



ABOUT

LAFFANOUR | GALERIE DOWNTOWN

Since its opening in the early 1980s, Laffanour | Galerie Downtown, founded by François Laffanour, has explored and presented through its exhibitions the furniture of 20th-century architects, contributing to the rediscovery and recognition of the masters of postwar architecture.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, designers and architects introduced a new vision of furnishing, driven by a need for freedom and efficiency, serving a new way of living in an era marked by technological and scientific development, as well as sociological, demographic, and social change.

Laffanour | 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.

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Laffanour | Galerie Downtown
at the CAB Foundation, Saint-Paul-de-Vence
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FONDATION CAB SAINT-PAUL DE VENCE

The CAB Foundation in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, housed in a superb 1950s building, aims to extend the mission of the CAB Foundation in Brussels, dedicated to minimal and conceptual art, through a dual program: the presentation of the Foundation's collection and thematic, seasonal exhibitions. This is complemented by an artist-in-residence program during the winter season.

Fully renovated by French architect and interior designer Charles Zana, the CAB Foundation Saint-Paul-de-Vence features several exhibition spaces, a bookshop-boutique, and a restaurant. Surrounded by a tree-filled garden overlooking Cap d'Antibes, four unique guest rooms, as well as a demountable Jean Prouvé house, further enhance the experience offered to visitors.



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