

# dwell

At Home in the Modern World

## Focus on Furniture

**Plus!**

At Home With  
*Game of Thrones*  
Star Lena Headey

Design Icons

Pierre Paulin  
and Jens Risom



An array of wood textures  
warms the dining and  
entertainment areas of an  
apartment in São Paulo, Brazil.

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# Modern World

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## Back to the Future

A posthumous first edition of rare furnishings unboxes the archives of French modernist Pierre Paulin.

TEXT BY  
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Pierre Paulin (1927–2009) designed the modular *Tapis-siège* ("Carpet-seat") as part of a residential furniture collection for Herman Miller in 1970; though never put into production in its time, the groovy,

origami-like piece has since garnered a cult following. In the wake of a one-off presentation of it by Louis Vuitton at Design Miami in 2014, Paulin's family has released a limited edition represented by Galerie Perrotin.



Designed in 1966, Paulin's oversize *La Déclive* ("The Slope") chaise comprises ribs of tubular cushions united by an adjustable, vertebrae-like frame (left). Made from interlocking planes of lacquered sheet aluminum, the arched base of the 1981 *Cathédrale* table alludes to Gothic architecture (below left). Sinuous, curvaceous forms encourage

communal interaction in the *Face à Face* ("Face to Face," below) and *Dos à Dos* ("Back to Back," bottom) lounges, both designed in 1968; the latter was originally commissioned as gallery seating for the Louvre. Previously unproduced or only privately held, all four pieces are now available as limited first editions from Galerie Perrotin.



Pierre Paulin has been a household name for quite some time. The late French designer, who produced his first furnishings for Meubles TV and Thonet France, is best known for capturing the verve of the Swinging Sixties with innovative, sculptural seating designs that wed stretch-fabric upholstery with undulating, Space Age forms in bright, pop-driven hues for Artifort. But he also designed whole interior environments, including state commissions for French presidents Georges Pompidou and François Mitterand; cofounded a global industrial design agency, ADSA, in 1975; and worked through a number of stylistic periods with rigor and élan in the course of his six-decade career. Shortly before Paulin's death, his family founded a firm—Paulin, Paulin, Paulin—in 2008 as a venue to preserve, enrich, and make accessible his prolific and forward-looking body of work. We spoke to Paulin's widow, Maïa, and their son, Benjamin, about the designer's continuing influence.

**How did the idea to form Paulin, Paulin, Paulin begin?**

**Benjamin Paulin:** It started with my father, in 2007, when we mounted an exhibition with Galerie Azzedine Alaïa >



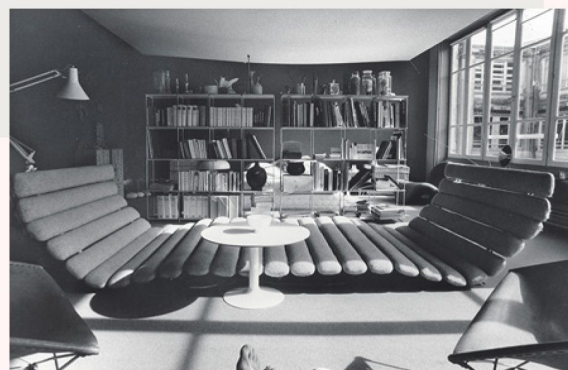
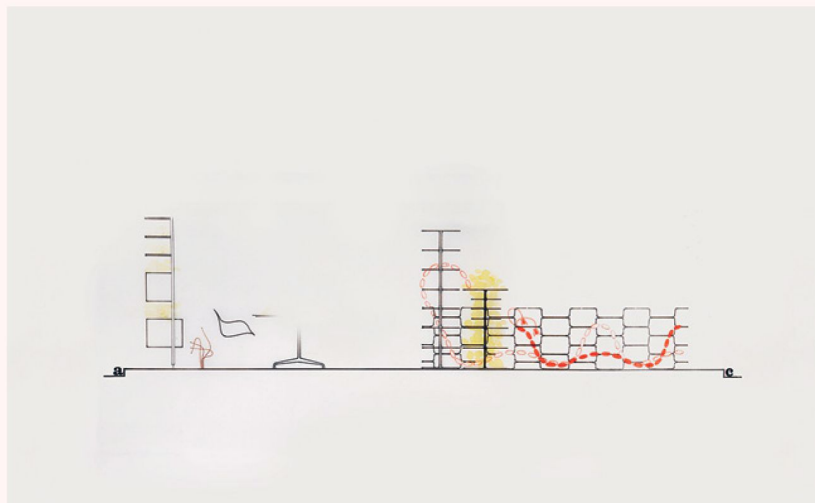
**"My favorite design is the one to come, either by me or by a future generation."  
—Pierre Paulin (1927–2009), designer**



in Paris. He presented a prototype, and, surprised by the positive reception it received, said, "Maybe one day we'll make a limited edition of it." Of course, it wouldn't be possible to create these complex pieces industrially, but why not produce them? And so, in 2008, we decided, with my mother and with my wife, Alice, to create this organization.

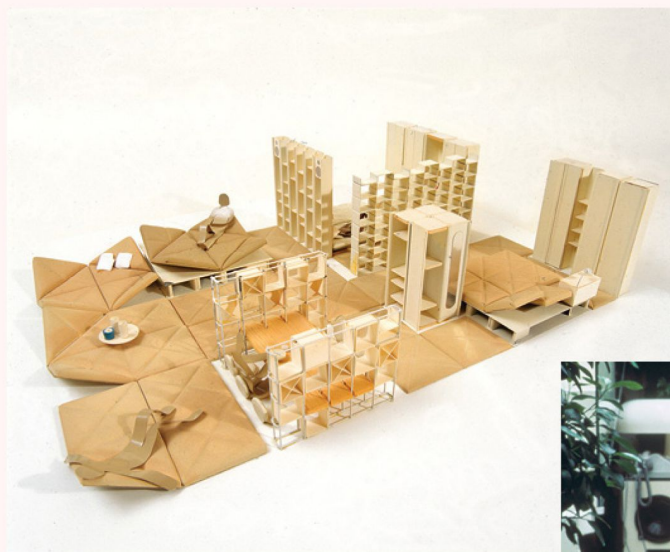
**In addition to the new first-edition pieces Paulin, Paulin, Paulin has produced, your collective activities include books, exhibitions, and an archive housed at your family retreat in the Cévennes, where Pierre spent his last days. What are the hopes and goals behind these efforts?**

**Maïa Paulin:** To work on the image, to work on everything, to make everything coherent—to keep alive his legacy, and all the pieces that weren't able to see a large distribution, either because they were difficult to manufacture or because they were private commissions. Pierre has always been considered ahead of his time, so for us today, one goal is to produce these unrealized pieces that can now be well received by collectors. >



A cross-section diagram of a modular furniture system considers various pieces—including La Déclive, indicated in red—at scale with one another (top). Paulin and his

family lived among many of his designs, including the original prototype for La Déclive, which they used at their Paris loft on the Faubourg Saint-Antoine from 1975 to 1980 (above).



Focused on functionality and flexibility, Paulin's 1972 maquette of a residential interior, originally produced for Herman Miller, demonstrates how the modular Tapis-siège could be used in tandem with other

furnishings to sculpt and define a space (above). Pierre Paulin, his wife, Maïa, and their son, Benjamin, lounge on an early prototype of the Tapis-siège in 1985 at their then-home in Paris on the Rue des Ursulines (right).





**“We want to keep his work and legacy alive. Paulin, Paulin, Paulin is all about transmission.” —Benjamin Paulin**



Paulin's 1992 Diwan wool rug takes inspiration from both Arabian diwan seating and the formal compositions of classic French landscaping and garden design (above). Faceted forms make up the Iéna arm-chair he designed for the French Ministry of Culture by state commission in 1985 (top). Both are now available as limited first editions.



**Paulin was able to see quite a bit of success in his lifetime. How has the market for his work since changed?**

**Benjamin:** Right now, there are a few different markets for his work, which I think is totally particular in his case. There is one range of prices for the pieces that are still in production, by Ligne Roset, for example—then there is the vintage market, and the collectibles market for rare or limited-edition pieces. It can be difficult to navigate, but we are sure of what we are doing.

**What has it been like to know both sides of him—Pierre Paulin, the husband and father, and now, in retrospect, the legendary designer?**

**Maïa:** Pierre and I worked together for 36 years; we were partners and we exchanged thoughts on everything. It's very rewarding for me to now look at things through his eyes.

**If there is one approach or methodology that defines Paulin's diverse body of work, how would you describe it?**

**Benjamin:** He constantly looked to both the future and the past. Even today, my father's models still represent an idea of the future; it's a kind of vision of the future that stays forever. In fact, maybe that should be the name of the next Paulin exhibition: *Future Forever*. □

**What was it like to live among and actively use his prototypes?**

**Benjamin:** It was fantastic, and to us, totally normal. He'd bring prototypes home all the time, and not just to test them out; they were really part of our lives. When I'd go to friends' apartments, I remember thinking the furniture was so rigid, so sad. It felt happy and special to be living with my father's designs.