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JOAN SMALLS



Pierre Yovanovitch

INTERIOR - BUT MAKE IT HAUTE COUTURE! FRENCH **INTERIOR ARCHITECT** AND DESIGNER PIERRE YOVANOVITCH CAN NOT DENY HIS EARLY DAYS IN THE **FASH-ION** SCENE. TODAY THE FASHION-TURNED-INTERIOR DESIGNER CREATES DESIGN CONCEPTS WHICH ENTHUSE WITH HIGH-CLASS **BOHEMIAN AESTHETICS** AND OUTSTANDING CRAFTSMANSHIP. WE USED OUR CHANCE TO GET HOLD OF HIM TO TALK **PASSION**, DREAMS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF TIMELESS DESIGNS.



INTERVIEW: PIERRE YOVANOVITCH

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Words by **Constantin Gust**



9/10: Pierre, lovely to get the chance to get to know you better. You are an interior icon of our time but never even studied design or architecture. How did you end up here?

Pierre: I remember that I always wanted to play 'interior architect' as a child. My mother will attest to it. I spent hours drawing planes including the detail of the interior of the cabin or the interior and exterior of homes. I even included detailed drawings of the furniture. From an early age, I learned that the layout or design of a space can completely shift the mood and overall ambience of a home. I was really drawn to the process of altering a space in this way, so I would also rearrange the furniture of my childhood home.

Before starting your own atelier in 2001, you were working in menswear with Pierre Cardin. Why did you decide to leave the fashion industry and pursue interior design instead?

Pierre Cardin was an architect of clothing with a deep understanding of geometry, volumes, angles, a master of colours, patterns and had a great sense of detail. I literally sharpened my eye by working with him. He taught me that in order to create, you have to come with an immense curiosity and a thirst to learn and to discover. Also, he was a bold businessman who showed me how to be comfortable making mistakes and not give up. After ten years at his side I decided to stand on my own feet. I knew that my passion rooted in interior design, so I took a leap of faith and all the transferable skills I acquired from Cardin – and applied them to the field design.

Fashion and interior sure have a lot of characteristics in common, but what's the biggest difference between working in both industries?

Of course the timelines for projects differ a lot. Projects in the interior architecture space can take a couple of years to complete, depending on the scope. For furniture design, we often go through several iterations over many months up to a couple of years. We make sure to get the design just right and to ensure best quality. With fashion – even for couture labels – things move much more quickly. Truly, I am so happy to have been exposed to the fashion world early in my career but I have found my calling in interior and furniture design!

We heard that you are an avid art collector, how are art and interior design connected? Could you imagine a space without art?

Art and design are interrelated in a lot of ways within my work. At the core of my design practice is my appreciation for art. The type of art varies depending on the space I'm designing but no matter the format, it always plays a key role in my creative process. Often I work with artists to create site-specific works as the focal point of my interiors such as Richard Nonas and Yan Pei-Ming or upcoming artists such as Claire Tabouret and Jeremy Desmester to name just a few. I use these works to help bring unique character to any space and to really set the tone for the property. Art breathes character and poetry into a space and surely is a key fixture to any interior.

You have designed every type of room from residential spaces to hotels and museums. Which spaces do you find most interesting to work with?

It's challenging to answer this question. I approach each design with a specific brief which is influenced by not only the client's needs but the context like state of the existing architecture or region in which the property is situated. Each project is so different, each undertaking is completely unique. Also the projects in itself: When it comes to residential spaces the living room area allows lot of creative expression by being a larger space which is typically one of the most highly trafficked rooms.

You inspire a lot of people with your ability to restructure old spaces to create a contemporary lifestyle. Where do you draw your inspiration from?

Nature influences me as I love to be outside when I'm at home. I find a lot of inspiration in the region of Provence where I grew up and currently reside. Apart from this, I am also inspired by designers: I have a deeply-rooted love for the Swedish Grace, a not-so-well-known design movement from the 1920's. Rigor, balance, curves, depth of materiality were characteristics of the pieces of furniture from this era. They were often very simplistic pieces with an organic, raw quality like pine tree while also there were extremely sophisticated elements to them too. They are remarkable. I also look up to Nordic designers from the 30's and 60's such as Frits Henningsen or American designers like Paul Laszlo. Mid-century American designers knew how to overcome convention: steel, cork, ceramic, wood in numerous editions and variations. For example, Paul Frankl's cork and oak coffee table is fascinating. This period in American design has a lot of parallels to the interiors I create: I like the strength and authenticity of designs with almost architectural perfection, an apparent simplicity in the statement, personality, elegance, a touch of originality without ostentation or arrogance and an exactitude that is timeless.

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Recently, you launched your own furniture brand Pierre Yovanovitch Mobilier. What was the motivation behind that?

Creating custom furniture and lighting works has been an integral part of my design process ever since. These works started as a way for me to ensure the design elements of a client's interior were of the highest quality and fit the space perfectly, though the pieces I created quickly evolved into a form of creative expression in and of itself. Apart from it being a lifelong dream of mine, the launch is a way for me to bring my designs to the wider public, beyond the context of my interiors and beyond offering these pieces through a gallery.

Our society is facing enormous challenges with the climate crisis and non-sustainable consumption being two of the biggest ones. What are some of the challenges the home and interior design industry is facing and how are you tackling them with your new brand?

Sustainability is certainly an issue in the home and furniture industry. In the era of mass-production in furniture design it's crucial to the integrity of my work to offer long-lasting, timeless pieces to cut through the noise of cheaply made designs which are quick to end up in a landfill. We design all projects with the aim of lasting a lifetime! With both my furniture design and my interior projects, I work with sustainably-sourced, high-quality materials wherever possible. We use local woods such as oak, walnut or larch, from eco-certified forests and natural fibers such as wool, cotton, silk, cashmere, linen, hemp, mohair as much as possible. Currently we are pushing our craftsmen to source improved natural and organic foams for our seats, even though this is not something easy to do and find. But the change needs to come from a sustainable alliance between the principals who order, the craftsmen who make and the clients who purchase.

Regarding your personal future: What is about to come?

For now I'm working on a number of private residential projects around the world. I'm also designing the set for the Basel Opera in 2023 which I'm quite excited about!

