



Pierre Yovanovitch

Symphony Between Worlds

Words
SUBIN ANDERSON
Photography
LUDOVIC BALAY

French interior architect and furniture designer Pierre Yovanovitch builds worlds where subtle gestures and a timeless sense of anticipation shape each environment, charged with graceful tension and enduring presence. Since establishing his practice in Paris in 2001 and launching Pierre Yovanovitch Mobilier two decades later, Yovanovitch has expanded his spatial language into furniture design, crafting pieces that embody rhythm and structure, guided by a keen sensitivity to the spaces they inhabit.

Behind his singularly tailored spaces and distinctive furniture lies not only a mastery of design but an intuitive understanding of how memory, emotion, and artistic lineage inform ambience.

Rooted in a deep reverence for design history, craftsmanship, and heritage, Yovanovitch continuously pushes forward with contemporary expression.

In this interview, Yovanovitch shares insights into the intentional and sensory logic behind his practice, revealing designs that carry the imprints of lived experience. His reflections convey a desire to connect, seeing design as a patient, evolving dialogue with our surroundings.

SUBIN ANDERSON: I'm struck by the way your furniture designs often carry a quiet yet vivid sense of character, especially in the supporting elements like chair legs, table bases, or lamp stands. They look quietly theatrical, almost like characters in a silent play, poised, expressive, and full of subtle personality.

PIERRE YOVANOVITCH: I conceive each piece as a character in its own right. The legs of my furniture pieces are somewhat like the foundations of this personality. I see them almost as limbs that anchor the object to the ground while giving it a sense of movement.

I'm very interested in the idea of contained tension: how a curve can suggest a gesture, a tilt of the head, a moment of anticipation, without ever tipping into caricature. This is where the discreet theatricality you refer to takes shape: it's not a theater of words or effects, but of postures, textures, and silences. I like the object to tell a story without speaking.

Pieces like *Monsieur Oops* and *Madame Oops* play with this idea of silhouette, al-

most like projected shadows — they are both familiar and enigmatic. It's a balancing act between function, form, and emotion.

SA: Thinking about how you encompass both interior architecture and furniture design, what kind of elements have the strongest ability to transform the atmosphere of a space?

PY: From my perspective, two elements have a particular ability to shift the atmosphere of a space: art and fireplaces.

I choose artworks carefully, not just for their aesthetic, but for the dialogue they create with the architecture. A piece can bring tension, softness, or rhythm to a room. It becomes part of the narrative.

Fireplaces also play a key role. I often design them as central elements within a

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space. Through their scale, material, and form, they structure the room and create a sense of gravity and warmth.

Both art and fireplaces contribute to the identity of a project. They ground the space and give it a sense of presence.

SA: Given that your projects are so carefully tailored to each client and context, how does your approach to color and pattern evolve from one to the next? Have there been shades or combinations you once resisted that now feel essential to your palette?

PY: It's true that each project requires a very specific approach, especially when it comes to color and pattern. I always treat them as narrative tools, rather than purely decorative elements in the superficial sense of the term. Their purpose is to tell a story that aligns with the place, its history,

its light, and above all, with the personality of those who will live there.

My sensitivity to color is deeply rooted in my connection to art, and particularly to painting. During a trip to Milan, I rediscovered the work of Felice Casorati, whose command of color left a lasting impression on me.

Over time, my approach to color has evolved. Where I once instinctively gravitated toward natural palettes, I now allow for more contrast. Shades I might previously have dismissed — a cobalt blue, a deep olive green, or a faded pink — have since found their place, as long as they are thoughtfully integrated into the whole.

These are sometimes bolder choices, which call for real dialogue and collaboration with the client. It's about guiding them, sharing a vision, and showing how

these combinations make sense within a given context. This work, often invisible because it blends so seamlessly into the space, is essential to giving a place genuine longevity.

SA: You draw deeply from music, opera, art, and fashion, allowing these creative worlds to intersect within your work. How does this dialogue between disciplines shape your design narrative?

PY: I've always drawn inspiration from art in all its forms — music, opera, theater, fashion, painting... These disciplines evoke emotions without needing to explain everything. They awaken more than they demonstrate, and that's precisely the quality I seek to bring into a space.

Each artistic encounter that moved me has pushed me to explore further, a discipline, a movement, or an artist's work.





These exchanges between creative worlds continue naturally. For example, I collaborated with Claire Tabouret, who reinterpreted one of my armchairs and painted the chapel of Château de Fabrigères, which I restored. That place perfectly embodies the dialogue between art, architecture, and memory.

This same spirit shapes the Pierre Yovanovitch Mobilier galleries in Paris and New York. They aren't just spaces for showing furniture — they regularly host artworks that resonate with the pieces on display. It creates a kind of creative tension, prevents routine, and keeps the eye alert.

I keep looking for that energy in everything around me — exhibitions, concerts, contemporary works. Inspiration often comes from intersections, from subtle shifts in perspective. It's these points of friction that allow me to tell stories differently.

SA: And building on your deep connection to opera, which you've explored not only as an avid listener but also through your stage designs for projects like *Rigoletto* at Theater Basel and *Le Nozze di Figaro*. If someone were attending their very first opera, what would you recommend as a perfect introduction?

PY: For someone attending their very first opera, I would recommend *Tosca*. It's dramatic, accessible, and musically rich, with a strong narrative and emotional intensity that draw you in right away. It's a striking example of how music and staging can come together to create a truly immersive experience.

SA: Your projects are so deeply intertwined with the work of master artisans. How do you approach nurturing traditional craftsmanship today? And conversely, what insights or inspiration do you hope to gain from emerging makers as the practice of craft continues to change?

PY: Craftsmanship is essential to my work. I never design a space or a piece of furniture without thinking about the gesture, the material, and the hand that will bring it to life. From the beginning, I've been drawn to the precision and intelligence behind each detail, and to the dialogue between head and hand.

That's why we acquired the Manufacture d'Argentat, a carpentry and cabinet-making workshop in Corrèze. It's a place of transmission and experimentation where we train young artisans and develop new pieces for the Pierre Yovanovitch Mobilier collection. The idea is not just to preserve know-how, but to activate it by connecting it to contemporary design and giving it space to evolve.

Over time, I've also built relationships with independent artisans whose work resonates with my approach. One example is the ceramicist Armelle Benoit. I had a real connection to her work, which is now part of many of our interior architecture projects and furniture pieces. Her approach to material, texture, and form speaks to something both grounded and experimental, and brings a unique presence

to each space.

To me, craftsmanship stays relevant when it stays in motion — when it questions, adapts, and finds new expressions in today's world. This back-and-forth between heritage and invention is, in my opinion, what gives craftsmanship its relevance today. It's not about freezing a heritage, but about allowing it to breathe, evolve, and remain alive.

SA: Long drawing from a wide span of design histories from Swedish Grace and French modernism to early 20th-century American designers becomes particularly insightful in a time when design is often driven by speed or surface appeal. How do your dual commitments to rigor in design history and curiosity toward contemporary creation allow these legacies to enter a new kind of dialogue?

PY: For me, design is a living language, a bridge between past and present. What draws me to the Swedish Grace movement, French modernism, or early 20th-century American designers is how they blend utility and aesthetics without striving for spectacle, but rather focusing on simplicity and precision.

My approach isn't just about referencing these movements, it's about understanding them and adapting them to contemporary contexts. I enjoy navigating between eras, blending tradition with innovation in a way that feels natural. Design history isn't a thing of the past, but a constant source of inspiration.

In a time when design can sometimes prioritize speed or immediate impact, my dual commitment to studying the classics and embracing current trends helps me

stay grounded while exploring new possibilities. This balance between respect for the past and curiosity for the present shapes my work, enabling me to create pieces that feel both meaningful and timely.

SA: As you've designed across so many worlds, from residences to public spaces to art, I wonder, is there a type of place or atmosphere you haven't had the chance to explore, but hope to one day shape?

PY: One area I haven't fully explored yet, and that interests me, is the stage — broadly speaking. I would like to design a theater or concert hall, not just as a set designer, as I did for *Rigoletto* or *The Marriage of Figaro*, but by imagining the space as a whole: its architecture, acoustics, atmosphere, and the way it welcomes the audience and supports the performance. Opera, music, and live performance have

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long been part of my world. Designing a space dedicated to these forms would be a natural extension.

I'm also increasingly drawn to the connection between art, architecture, and landscape. I imagine a place open to nature — a kind of open-air art path or outdoor exhibition, where artworks, furniture, and light structures would interact with the natural environment. A place for walking, pausing, and observing, where human creation and landscape enter into conversation.

This type of project would bring together contemporary art, craft, architecture, and sensitivity to the site. It wouldn't be about imposing a vision, but working with what's already there — the topography, the light, the wind, the vegetation. I'm interested in a way of presenting art that's physical and changing, shaped by movement and by the rhythm of nature.

SA: Your two current spaces, the Paris headquarters and the New York gallery, feel like an open invitation into your creative universe. Can you speak a bit about how these spaces function as extensions of your design philosophy?

PY: These spaces are important to me. The Paris headquarters is where our team of architects, designers, and interior designers comes together. It's a place of concentration, research, and exchange, designed to foster dialogue between architecture, furniture, drawing, and materials.

The galleries in Paris and New York serve a different but complementary purpose. They are spaces for showcasing my world, evolving constantly, where furniture, art, and collaborations — like with Claire Tabouret or Christian Louboutin — interact. Each scenography tells a unique story.

Having galleries in both Paris and New York gives me different perspectives. Each city brings its own energy and rhythm, pushing me to stay curious and avoid repetition. This constant exchange between studios, galleries, and exhibitions drives my work. I believe creation thrives in movement, dialogue, and openness.

SA: Creating one-of-a-kind spaces often means balancing tradition and innovation, permanence and impermanence, restraint

and expression. How do your principles of haute couture and savoir-faire help you embrace and navigate these inherent tensions in your work?

PY: The tensions between tradition and innovation, sobriety and expression, permanence and impermanence—are part of what drives my work. They don't limit me; they shape the framework within which I can experiment. It's a balance between precision and freedom.

My approach has always been rooted in attention to the hand and the process. A single line, a well-executed joinery, a certain way of working a surface — these elements speak for themselves. I've naturally brought this sensitivity to detail into interior architecture and furniture design.

But I don't believe beauty lies in perfection. It often emerges from what's slightly

a space you feel especially connected to. Is it your Château de Fabrègues in Provence, or perhaps another place that brings you a particular sense of warmth and peace of mind?

PY: I believe that each of us carries within us a refuge, an intimate geography that accompanies us. For me, this place is the Château de Fabrègues, in Provence. I discovered it almost by chance about 20 years ago, and it immediately felt like an obvious choice. It was neglected, overgrown with vegetation, but there was a light, an energy, something deeply rooted in the earth.

Restoring Fabrègues was a long process, one filled with patience and reinvention. I infused it with what I love: raw materials, silent volumes, a dialogue between the old and the new. Every stone, every

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irregular — from the traces of time, from textures that catch the light differently. I'm drawn to wood with knots, stones with veins, and fabrics that shift with movement. These so-called imperfections give a space its humanity.

I don't try to control materials, but to understand and respect them. Oak, bronze, chamotte clay, linen — each has its own rhythm, its own presence over time. Working with them rather than against them allows for spaces that can evolve and age naturally.

This way of working requires slowing down. In a world shaped by urgency and surface, I try to remain attentive to the material, the gesture, and time. It's not about resisting innovation, but anchoring it in something tangible and lasting.

SA: Before we finish, I'd love to hear about

shadow, every tree in the garden has been preserved and listened to. It's a place that centers me, that brings me back to what is essential.

What moves me there is the contrast between the dry, mineral, almost harsh landscape and the simple, lived-in architecture. It's a house of silence, low light, and breathing. It's not spectacular, but it has a true presence. I recharge there, and it's often where the drive for my projects begins.

This place teaches me every day that things should not be forced, that one must know how to observe, wait, and above all, listen to time. Perhaps that, deep down, is true luxury.



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Left: Exterior view of Château de Fabrègues. Photo by Paolo Abate