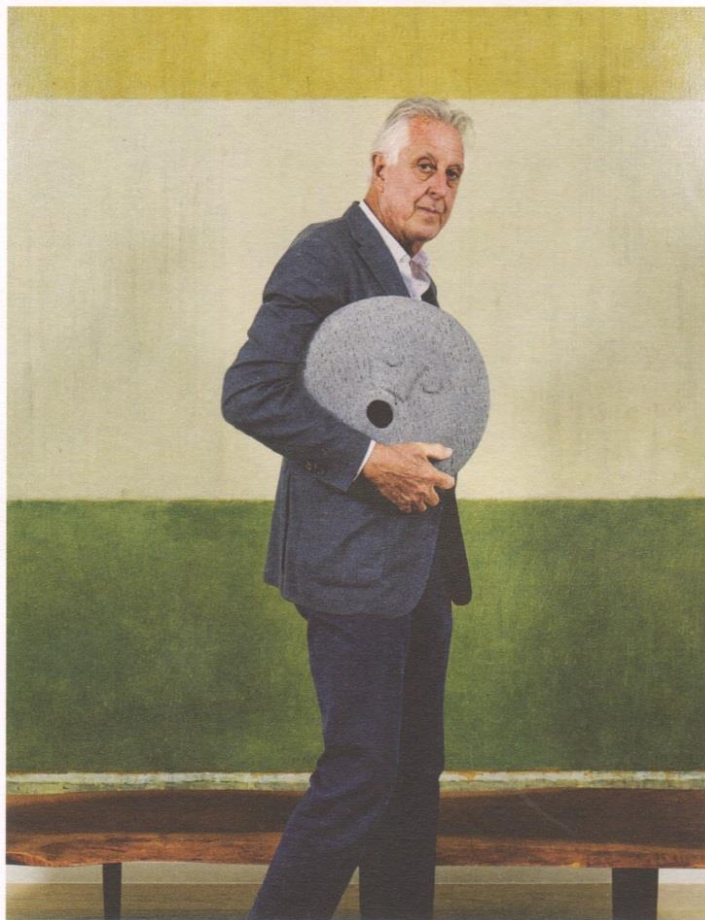


The matchmaker

Jean-Jacques Dutko brings together beautiful pieces from different eras in his new Mayfair gallery and as an exhibitor at London's popular art and design fair, PAD. By Claire Wrathall

Photographs by Nick Ballon



If you were asked to pick a stand that encapsulates the ethos of PAD – the annual London fair that specialises not just in art and design, but in Asian, Islamic and tribal art, antiquities and jewellery as well – you could do worse than pick Galerie Dutko. Founded by Jean-Jacques Dutko in Paris in 1979, it ostensibly specialises in art deco: works by the likes of Marcel Coard, Paul Dupré-Lafon, Jean-Michel Frank, Katsu Hamanaka, Eugène Printz, Armand Rateau and Pierre Jeanneret, a cousin of Le Corbusier, with whom he collaborated on many projects, among them the Villa Savoye

Above, Jean-Jacques Dutko with Robert Courtright's *Le Mask*, a Nakashima walnut bench and Jean-Pierre Pincemin's *Untitled*, 1984

Opposite, from top: Georges Koskas, *Points*, and a Maori paddle; a Lino Tagliapietra vase, *Bilbao*, 2004, on a Hans Wegner oak Crocodile chest, 1949

and parts of Chandigarh. But such is the scarcity of truly outstanding original pieces that Dutko has diversified into other unexpected but complementary styles. Step into his new gallery in London's Mayfair and there against one wall stands a pair of exquisite 'Egyptian' lacquer chairs designed in 1940 by Marc du Plantier, their off-white silk upholstery buttoned in bronze. Adjacent stands a Maori paddle mounted on a low plinth, while above them hangs the late Argentinian artist Luis Tomasello's *Objet plastique no 550* (1983), a large-scale abstract relief.

The piece about which Dutko is audibly most excited, however, is the 'very important' ebony desk (circa 1925–30) at which the designer Marcel Coard, a pre-eminent exponent of French art deco, used to work. 'It is really a museum piece,' he says, pointing out the bronze hoofs at the end of its tapering legs. Indeed, one can see where the artist used to rest his wrists in the patina on its python-skin top.

If the furniture in which Dutko deals is mostly art deco, the walls are hung with works from the second half of the 20th century by artists such as Béatrice Casadesus, the abstractionist Jean-Pierre Pincemin and the American Robert Courtright, whose black basaltina mask could almost be Cycladic. There are some new tables and stools, too, notably a range by the Italian sculptor Bruno Romeda. The unifying factor in what he sells is, says Dutko, 'what I like'.

Dutko did not set out to deal in art deco, nor indeed in modern and contemporary art. His career began in advertising, but he made the switch to antique dealing in the late 1970s. 'I loved old furniture,' he says by way of explanation, having grown up surrounded by Louis XV and XVI. But his real epiphany came when he went to visit a client, the urologist Albert Moulouguet, with a view to buying some 18th-century pieces. What caught his eye, however, was the 1930s L-shaped desk the doctor had in his consulting room. 'It was fantastic!' Dutko remembers. 'Walnut and wrought iron. I asked what it was, and he said, "It's by Pierre Chareau, you know, the well-known architect."' Dutko asked to buy it. 'You're not in that league,' came the reply. So Dutko went home and researched Chareau and realised that his period was what he wanted to deal in. 'That was the *déclencheur*,' says Dutko. 'I sold all my antiques and started again.'

The other defining event in the development of Dutko's taste was the groundbreaking *Primitivism* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1984. Subtitled *Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, it was, he says, a revelation for the way it interspersed important works by Brancusi, Gauguin,

[ON SHOW: PAD]



Klee, Modigliani, Picasso and other 20th-century European artists with tribal objects, ancient and modern. Originally from Africa, Asia, Oceania and North America, several of these belonged to the private collections of artists themselves (Picasso, Matisse, Braque, Derain, Nolde, Ernst and Matta were all notable collectors).

It is this sort of original, often surprising but nonetheless logical juxtaposition that defines what Dutko shows both in his galleries and on his stand at PAD, where he will be exhibiting for the third time this autumn. 'I love PAD,' he says, 'because you find so many different things from so many different periods and places. People come to me and say they want to make their apartment entirely art deco, and I say, why? I mean, it can look nice, but it is so restricting when there are so many contemporary artists whose work shares the same inspiration and aesthetics, and sits so well with it.'

Is his gallery a sort of PAD in microcosm then? 'C'est vrai!' he agrees. 'PAD is exactly what I've been trying to do.' Though with 63 exhibitors lined up this year, the fair is on a rather bigger scale. ♦ *Galerie Jean-Jacques Dutko is at 11 rue Bonaparte and 4 rue de Bretonvilliers, Paris, and, from 8 October, 18 Davies Street, London W1. www.dutko.com. PAD London runs from 14 to 18 October in Berkeley Square, London W1. www.pad-fairs.com*



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