

**PRESSBOOK**

Pierre PAULIN

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Pierre, Mala, and  
Benjamin Paulin.  
Courtesy of Paulin Paulin  
Paulin.

## The Renaissance of Pierre Paulin, Georges Pompidou's—and now Kanye's—Favorite Furniture Designer

The late French designer, who is the focus of a major retrospective in Paris, gets his due in New York at Galerie Perrotin.

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At the latest exhibition in the French dealer Emmanuel Perrotin's New York gallery, the Upper East Side townhouse seems to have been recast as a Bond villain's lair, with mod yet lasciviously shaped chairs in deep reds, powdery blues, and pristine whites populating the space, accompanied by low tables and ceiling-to-floor carpeting. It's a now-familiar, now-retro cool vision of the future made famous through film, fashion, and design by Pierre Paulin.

"In the bad guy's house, there's always Pierre Paulin models," said his son Benjamin Paulin, a dead ringer for



The late Pierre Paulin has experienced a major posthumous revival of his designs in the last few years, particularly those from the 60's and 70's. The firm Paulin Paulin Paulin, helmed by Benjamin and his mother Maia Wodzislawska Paulin, promotes the French designer's legacy through limited editions of his models, including those never realized during Paulin's lifetime, some of which are now being reproduced with Perrotin. The current exhibition at the gallery, up now through August 19, runs concurrently with a major retrospective at the Centre Pompidou in Paris that features work from 1953 to 2007, expanding upon the notion that Paulin was solely a Pop icon. (The Perrotin show also features films by four of the gallery's artists who were inspired by Paulin, including Jesper Just and Xavier Veilhan.)

Paulin was the first designer to free French furniture from its courtly constraints, pulling new stretch fabrics—brought into vogue through fashion in the 50's—over biomorphic shapes. His iconic chairs became known for their instantly recognizable contours, such as the Tongue chair, sloped as if mid-lick, or the Orange Slice, which cradles one's body between two curved peels.

Though commonly linked with France—Paulin tended to the design needs of two French presidents, Georges Pompidou and François Mitterrand—his connections with New York run deep. MoMA was the first museum to acquire one of Paulin's designs, in 1965; while designers such as Charles Eames and George Nelson may have eclipsed him in his day, Paulin is having a renaissance both here and abroad, including in the fashion world. Louis Vuitton's 2015 Cruise show featured 30 of the designer's slinky, Udon-like Osaka sofas to seat the crowd, and the fashion house also helped produce the never-realized Tapis-Siège seat (1970), on view at Perrotin. Paulin counted Azzedine Alaïa among his close friends (a connection brokered, according to Maia, by Shanghai gallerist Pearl Lam) and produced a piece for the house's shop, the Cathédrale table (1981), also on view at Perrotin.

"They were both so meticulous," Maia said of her late husband and Alaïa. "They both understood how to go as far as possible. Or I should say: as far as impossible."

Other Paulin devotees include Tom Ford and Kanye West, who outfitted his Yeezy season three showroom in Paris with Paulin couches. Maia and Benjamin Paulin venture that the enduring appeal has to do with the enticing quality of the work. It was hard to argue with this point while we conducted our interview on the slinky red La Déclive chaise from 1966 in the gallery.

"It's meant to be sat on," Maia said. "It's not design [only] to be looked at."