

Design Added

Love it or hate it, everything in this Paris apartment is for sale

A Haussmannian home is also a showroom for polarising vintage design — not always functional, but often fun



Alice Cavanagh / Photographed for the FT by Julien Lienard

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The Paris-based gallerists Paul-Louis Betto, 27, and Paul Ménacer-Poussin, 26, have found themselves without [a sofa](#). The two friends, flatmates and business partners have parked themselves instead on two armchairs — an Yves de la Tour d’Auvergne angular Alpha armchair, and an aluminium and steel chair by Italian design duo Paolo Pallucco and Mireille Rivier. They don’t scale quite right in the vast living room of their 188 sq metre apartment.

The last sofa they had, a Cassina edition of the late Italian [designer](#) Gaetano Pesce’s 1984 Notturmo a New York model — a three-seated, padded piece printed with the facade of a skyscraper at night, with a moon-shaped backrest — was only in place for three weeks. That’s how quickly it sold.

Betto and Ménacer-Poussin are behind the vintage design gallery Pulp. Since 2023, the double salon of their Haussmann-era apartment in the French capital’s 9th arrondissement has served as their shopfront — a curated display of their catalogue in situ. The environment serves as a homely counterpoint to their assemblage of 1980s design objects — a radical era defined by bold experimentation and anti-functional aesthetics that prioritised visual impact over practicality.



Mario Botta's Robot 619 cabinet, 1989, for Alias Italy



Botta's Quarta chair, 1984, for Alias Italy

“We love impactful furniture that you either love or hate,” says Ménacer-Poussin about their offer. Some regard them as works of art, but they are challenging that. “We work with unique pieces that are mainly based on style, and the shape and materials do not respond to any function,” he adds.

Today, their “gallery” is spread across three rooms. The duo’s private quarters — two bedrooms and a kitchen — are situated at the back of the apartment. Alongside Pallucco’s work, there are pieces by Swiss architect Mario Botta, including his clever secretary desk, a set of drawers mounted on a cantilevered spine. I sit on one of Botta’s Quarta chairs — made of metal panels shaped into a geometric, graphic silhouette. It features a moulded foam backrest, which makes it surprisingly comfortable and supportive.



Gaetano Pesce's Broadway dining set, c1993, for Bernini

“We live with the furniture that we are selling to prove that it can all be used — [though] some of them are more sculptural than others,” Betto admits. Currently, they are investing in pieces by the Cologne-based 1980s designers behind the Pentagon Group, whose furniture was almost anti-ergonomic.

Between the pieces are piles of vintage design books to browse, and the duo has hung their personal art collection on the walls. It creates a full domestic experience. Until now, Instagram drove a lot of their sales. Next year, however, the duo will open a street-front gallery on the Left Bank. “We’ve lived together for three years, so . . .” says Ménacer-Poussin. “So, we need a bit of privacy,” says Betto, finishing his sentence.

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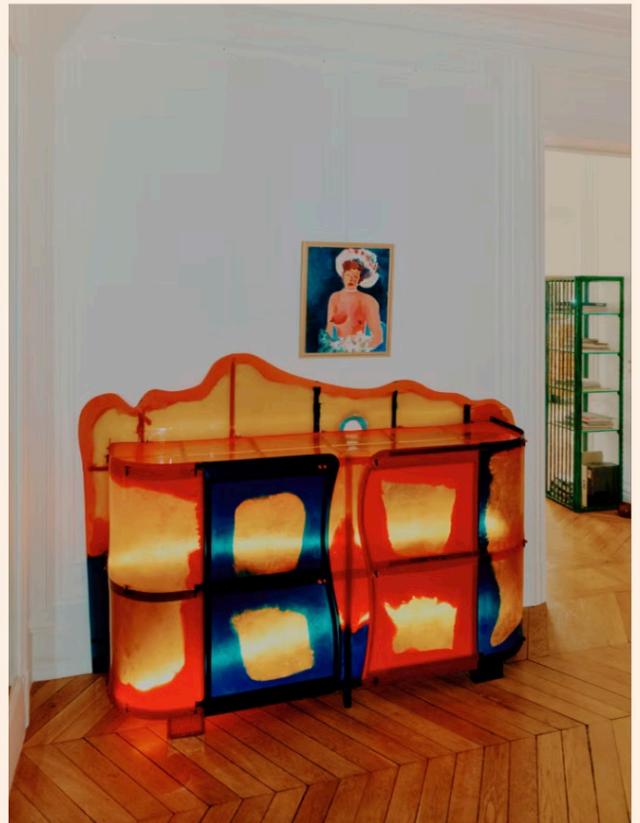
think that it was just about loving objects . . . but we connected on design,” he says.

Their focus has evolved considerably: they started out selling affordable 1970s furniture from French design brand Prisunic. They then became enamoured with the 1980s, beginning with Botta, who was more accessible and perhaps lesser known.

Betto and Ménacer-Poussin met on the first day of their master’s programme at IESA, an art business school in Paris, in 2020. Neither had come from the art or design worlds, but both had the collector’s bug — Betto was a one-time sneakerhead who has since levelled up his tastes. “I



Pesce's Chair 928, c1993, for Bernini



Pesce's Nobody's Perfect buffet, 2006, for Zerodisegno

With time, they began to invest in Pesce, a formative figure in the radical design movement. They started with pieces from his well-known series Nobody's Perfect (first released in 2002) — colourful resin furniture, including chairs, shelves, sideboards and even beds cast in anthropomorphic silhouettes that often resemble 3D inkblots of faces in profile. “He wanted to create ‘living furniture’, like you have your friends sitting with you,” Betto says of Pesce’s humorous takes.

“When we talk about Gaetano Pesce, we have to talk about his personality. Pesce really was a genius . . . his curiosity for materials and different types of forms is clear across all his work,” says Domenico Raimondo, head of design in Europe at Phillips auction house, which has sold numerous pieces by the designer and seen an uptick in the market value of his work. “It is the process behind Pesce’s work that gives it a unique quality. He embraced industrial processes, but the resins were poured in such a way that each piece retained its own fingerprint,” he adds.

“In the beginning, I wasn’t convinced — it took a bit of time,” admits Ménacer-Poussin. Both men once flew to Sicily to snap up one of Pesce’s rare beds after discovering it on Facebook Marketplace. “Now, it’s the biggest part of our work.”



Barba d'Argento armchair, 1986, Pallucco Roma edition, by Paolo Pallucco and Mireille Rivier



The chair is made of aluminium and steel and uses a bicycle chain

One of Pesce's Broadway 931 dining tables and a set of metal dining chairs with matching marbled blue and yellow resin sit in the double salon, though they will be packed up, along with a selection of seven other items, for the gallery's booth at PAD London. The monographic show will largely feature items from his early career, marked by pieces he personally made, including a square lamp the duo salvaged from the 1986 Pesce-designed bar at Il Palazzo Hotel, Fukuoka, Japan.

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Despite Pesce's cachet and increasing popularity, the duo gleefully anticipate that their stand will be polarising: "We know at the PAD booth there will be no middle ground," says Ménacer-Poussin, adding: "We quite like it when people are shocked and surprised."

pulpgalerie.com. PAD London, Berkeley Square, Mayfair, October 14-19;
padesignart.com/en/london/

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