

CHARLOTTE PERRIAND

The Art of Dwelling



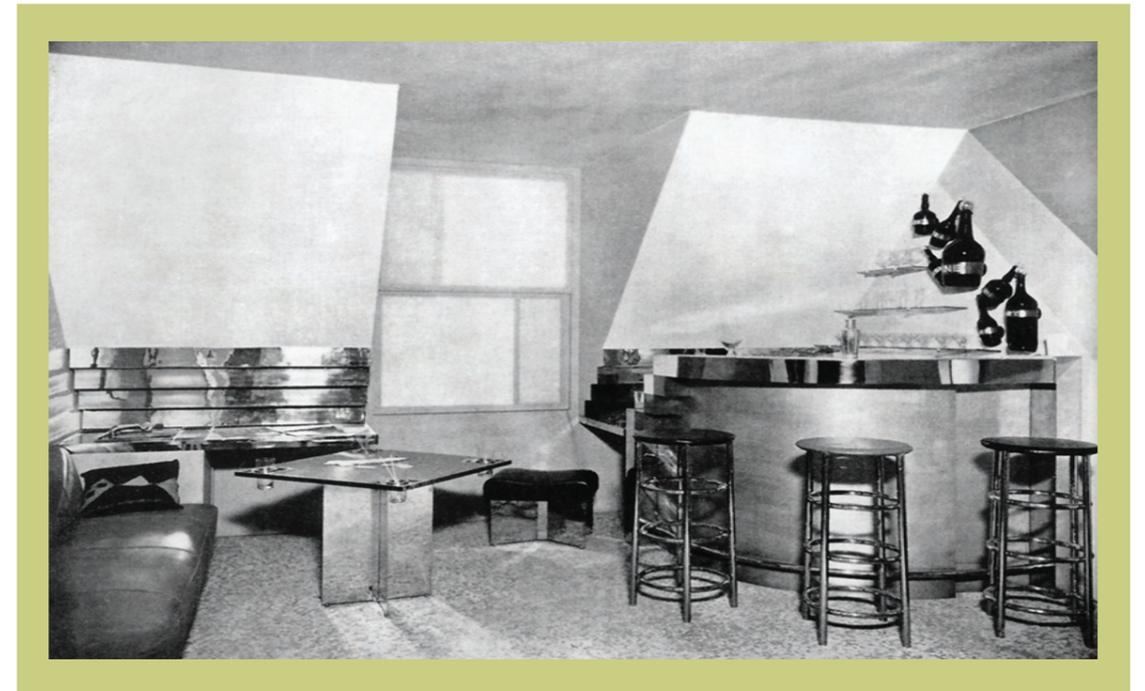
ARTIST, INTERIOR DESIGNER, ARCHITECT, URBAN PLANNER, FURNITURE MAKER AND SOCIAL ACTIVIST: CHARLOTTE PERRIAND IS ONE OF THE MOST CROSS-DISCIPLINARY AND NOTEWORTHY FIGURES OF THE 20TH CENTURY.

Perriand believed that thoughtful design had the power to change individual lives, and wider society, for the better. Speaking in 1981, she said, 'The extension of the art of dwelling is the art of living—living in harmony with man's deepest drives and with his adopted or fabricated environment.' This line perfectly encapsulates what Perriand devoted her life to through her innovative modernist design.

Born in Paris in 1903, Perriand grew up immersed in a design environment - her father was a tailor and her mother a seamstress. Her own artistic skills were recognised from a young age, and after leaving school she enrolled at the l'Ecole de l'Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs, where she studied furniture design.

From the beginning Perriand was a curious and open-minded designer, keen to embrace new technologies and materials in her work. This thinking was enhanced by her exposure to the latest innovations of Le Corbusier, one of the pioneers of modernist architecture. Le Corbusier took inspiration from the newly emerging philosophy of mass production, as he applied the concept of car, plane, and ship manufacture to buildings. Perriand admired Le Corbusier's dedication to functional design and his rejection of superfluous decoration. So much so that in 1927 she applied to work in his famous design studio at Rue de Sèvres. She was however quickly dismissed: 'We don't embroider cushions here,' Le Corbusier told her.

A month later Perriand's work was shown at the international art fair Salon d'Automne. Here she exhibited 'Bar sous le Toit' ('Bar Under the Roof'), a recreation of a corner of her loft apartment. Made entirely in nickel-plated copper and aluminium, the futuristic design featured curved forms, glass shelves and leather cushions. Corbusier was impressed by Perriand's pioneering realisation of the machine aesthetic, which embodied something uniquely special and head of its time. He quickly took back his earlier sexist snub and

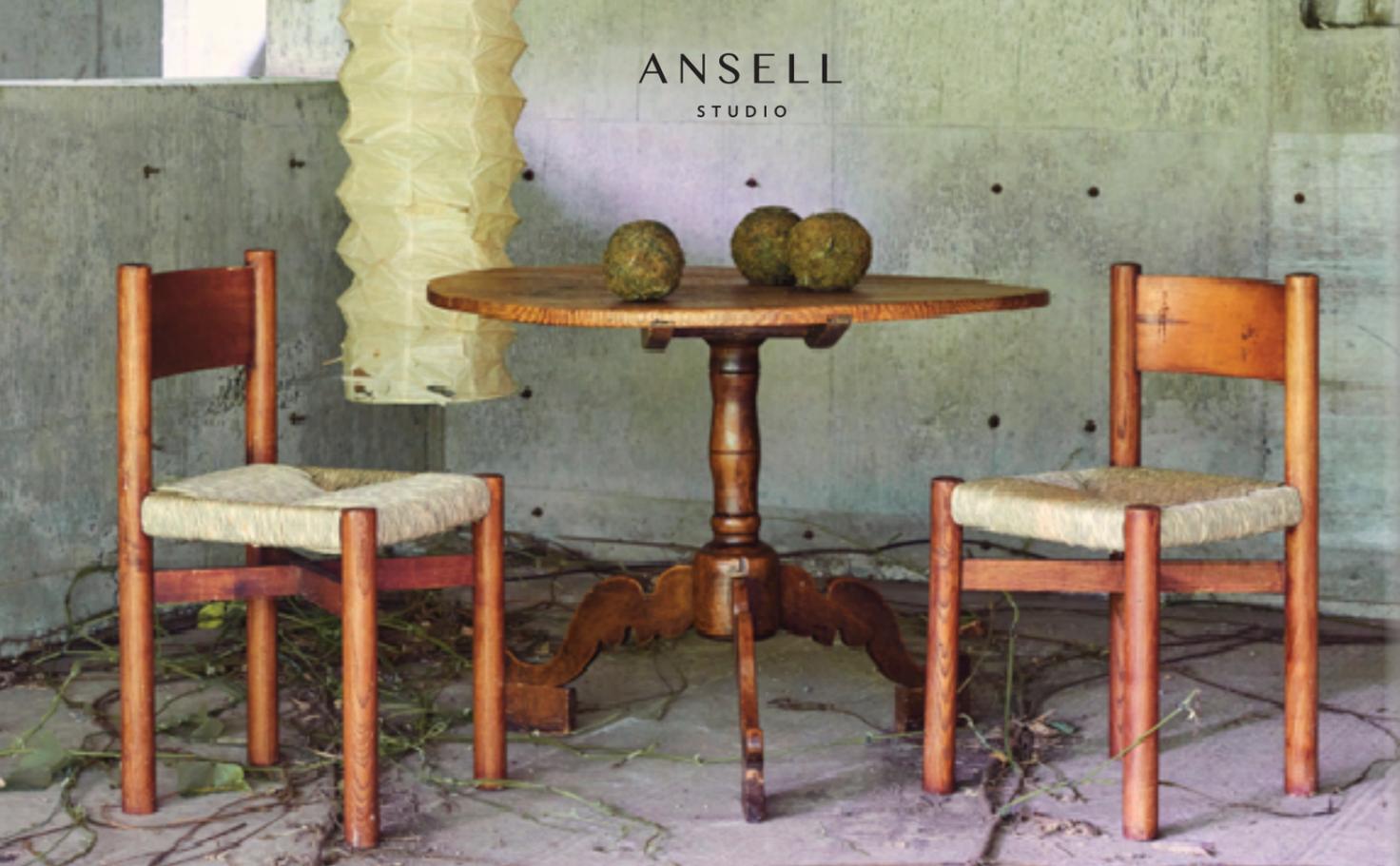


BAR SOUS LE TOIT | PARIS, FRANCE 1927

At Rue de Sèvres Perriand played a crucial role in the design process, as she brought a distinct element of humanity to Le Corbusier's somewhat cold ideology that 'the house is a machine for living'. Perriand, Le Corbusier and his cousin Pierre Jeanneret, developed three revolutionary pieces of furniture: the Basculant Sling Chair, for conversation, the Grand Confort, for relaxation, and the Chaise Longue, for sleeping. The sleek designs fully encapsulated the idea of a chair as a 'machine for sitting'.



THE GRAND CONFORT, CHAISE LONGUE AND BASCULANT SLING CHAIR



Perriand worked with Le Corbusier for a decade, during which time she developed many of the beautiful, minimalist pieces of furniture for which she is renowned today. When later reflecting on this period of her life she wrote that Le Corbusier ‘demolished...everything I had learned.’ Le Corbusier’s studio opened up Perriand’s eyes to a new way of thinking about design and its function. Together they opened up the world’s eyes to a new way of living.

In 1937 Perriand left Le Corbusier’s studio and began her journey as an independent designer. At this time her love for nature and the outdoors manifested itself in her work. Perriand appreciated the beauty and magnificence of nature and moved beyond modernism’s machine aesthetic. She began to use wood more frequently in her work and produced free-form tables with organic shapes, informed by the contours of the wood itself.

As ever Perriand was dedicated to creating not only a piece of furniture which possessed beauty but also functionality: the tables had fewer legs in order for more people to sit comfortably around them and she claimed that their curvaceous and irregular shapes meant that they could be positioned and moved anywhere in one’s living space.

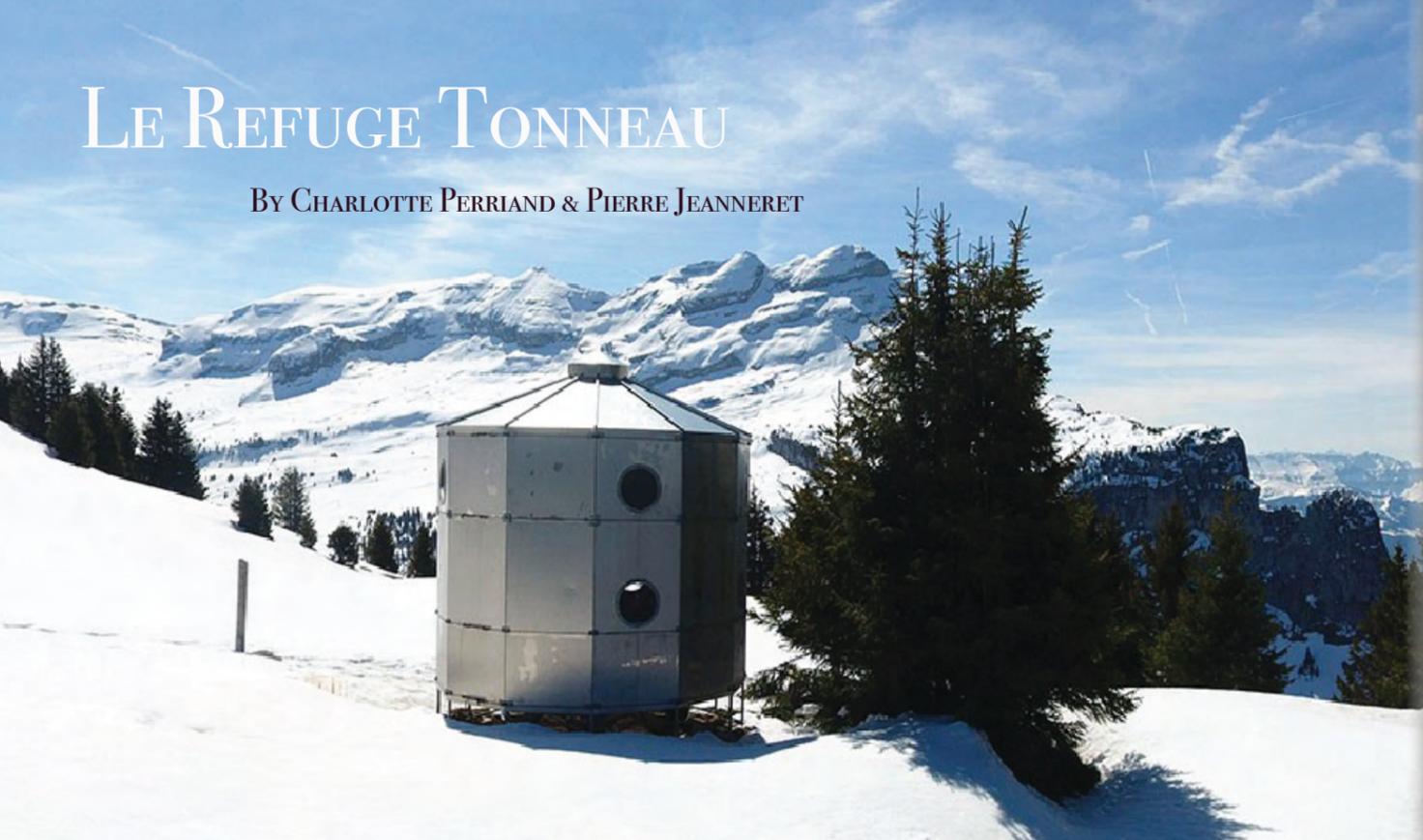


THE OFFICE OF JEAN RICHARD BLOCH | DESIGNED BY PERRIAND IN 1938



LE REFUGE TONNEAU

By CHARLOTTE PERRIAND & PIERRE JEANNERET



Thanks to her love of the outdoors, Perriand felt stimulated to design a mountain shelter that could endure the harsh weather conditions of any mountaintop yet light enough to be manually transported. This piece of nomadic architecture, which she named 'Le Refuge Tonneau' was constructed with the intention of having minimal impact on the natural environment, a notion that was years ahead of its time. Perriand's affinity with the natural world and materials was enhanced on a prolonged visit to Japan. During her stay she became fascinated by Japanese design and local craftsmanship.

Wall shelving that she saw in an imperial villa in Kyoto would later influence her revolutionary modular wood and metal cabinets and bookshelves. These designs contain little more than what is essential to their purpose: they are sleek, yet natural functional yet beautiful.

Although Perriand was initially sent to Japan as an adviser to the Ministry of Trade and Industry on industrial design, she quickly realised that Western ideas should not be forced upon local craftspeople. Rather, she saw the power in fusing the traditional craft of Japan and the modernist ideas that she had developed in France. This synthesis truly came to fruition in 1941 when she curated an exhibition displaying interiors where her furniture co-existed with vernacular Japanese crafts in a non-hierarchical way. She would later return to Tokyo to hold her second exhibition, ('Proposition d'une synthèse des arts') exploring her belief that different art forms - painting, design, architecture sculpture - could work in unison to bring about an improved way of life for all.



PORTRAIT OF CHARLOTTE PERRIAND



THE HOME OF MIQUEL ALZUETA | FEATURING PERRIAND'S NUAGE CABINET



PERRIAND'S FIRST EXHIBITION IN TOKYO, JAPAN | 1941

PERRIAND BELIEVED IN THE TRULY TRANSFORMATIVE NATURE OF GOOD DESIGN. WHETHER WORKING-CLASS HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS, FURNITURE FOR THE UPPER CLASSES, URBAN OR RURAL DWELLINGS, PERRIAND ALWAYS TACKLED HER PROJECTS WITH A DEEP PASSION FOR HUMANKIND AND THE NATURAL WORLD.

CHARLOTTE PERRIAND

1903-1999

