

# Légèretés manifestes

François Azambourg  
designer

Press release



9 March  
— 2 July 2023

MAD

François Azambourg. "Loupée" Puck Chair. Fall 1999. Permanent call of VIA 2000. 3<sup>rd</sup> research prototype © Les Arts Décoratifs / Photo: Charlaïne Croguennec / Hom project

# Légèretés manifestes

## François Azambourg designer

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1. François Azambourg —  
Helical mobile 2012  
L'Atelier d'exercices  
edition  
Samba, piano string,  
aluminum, latex elastic,  
granite pebble, lead, heat-  
shrinkable sheath  
© Studio L'Atelier du Vin

2. François Azambourg —  
Second prototype  
research chair  
Very Nice silk version  
2003 (creation)  
2022 (model)  
Birch plywood structure  
9 mm, water jet cut and  
glued, spruce and balsa  
reinforcement, cellulosic  
varnish, silk lining  
© Les Arts Décoratifs /  
Photo: Charline  
Croguennec /  
Hom project

**From March 9<sup>th</sup> through July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2023, the Musée des Arts Décoratifs will present the exhibition *Légèretés manifestes* (Lightness), dedicated to the designer François Azambourg. Recognized as one of the greatest figures of French design today, François Azambourg is a creator and a poet, engaged in the pressing ecological issues of our time. Rooted in constant search of lightness, economy of means and simplicity, his approach is open and without constraint. In a world increasingly thirsty for objects and products, it is his long-lasting experimentations that nourish his works.**



1.



2.

**With nearly 200 works on display, this exhibition invites visitors into Azambourg's unique creative world, featuring furniture, vases, lighting, and mobiles from his studio, as well as works held by the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, the Centre Pompidou, the CNAP, design manufacturers and private collections. The exhibition will be showcased on the second floor of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs overlooking the Tuileries Garden and will be staged in an ecologically friendly manner, with upcycled materials.**



3.

3. François Azambourg —  
*Douglas 153 Vase*  
 2020  
 Edition from CIAV  
 (International Center for  
 Glass Art, Meisenthal)  
 Blown and molded glass  
 Paris, Musée des Arts  
 Décoratifs  
 © Les Arts Décoratifs /  
 Photo: Christophe  
 Dellière

4. François Azambourg —  
*Inga Lamp*  
 1999 (creation)  
 Turned Sycomore,  
 LED light source  
 © Les Arts Décoratifs /  
 Photo: Christophe  
 Dellière

Born in 1963, François Azambourg studied at the École Régionale des Beaux-Arts de Caen before joining the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Appliqués et des Métiers d'Art (ENSAAMA). He then founded his own design studio in Paris and has since collaborated with the Centre International d'Art Verrier (CIAV), as well as Hermès, Ligne Roset, the Manufacture de Sèvres, Louis Vuitton, Cappellini, Poltrona Frau, and the Galerie kreò. He has won several important awards throughout his career and was a Musée des Arts Décoratifs laureate in 1985, as well as a laureate of the Fondation de France in 1988, the Fondation de la Vocation in 1993, the Villa Medici Hors les Murs in 2003, the Grand Prix du Design de la Ville de Paris in 2004, and the Villa Kujoyama in 2015. Azambourg's works are held in prestigious public collections as well, including the Centre Pompidou, the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, and CNAP. In addition to his artistic recognition, Azambourg maintains close ties with the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, which has acquired several of his emblematic works in recent years, such as the Split Wood chair in 2015, after his return from a residency at the Villa Kujoyama, as well as blown molded glass vases from his *Douglas* series.

Azambourg's prolific work radiates across all fields of design. In every project, he works with a sincere approach while questioning and challenging the norm. His design offers a new perspective beyond the work itself, making the structure of the object visible. Azambourg provides absolute transparency, he does not hide anything. Everything is said. Everything is shown.

The show traces back to the very essence of his work, starting from the origins of his approach to the design industry, including artistic expression, craftsmanship, living experience and the notion of context as a source of inspiration.



4.

5. François Azambourg —  
 Armchair  
 2015  
 Split chestnut, wood ash  
 dyed, amber varnish  
 Paris, Musée des Arts  
 Décoratifs  
 © Les Arts Décoratifs /  
 Photo: Jean Tholance

6. François Azambourg —  
*La Chaise de Monsieur  
 Bugatti*  
 Blue version  
 2006  
 Prototype  
 4/10 mm laminated steel  
 sheet, wrinkled and self-  
 welded, two-component  
 PU foam filling, varnished  
 lacquer  
 © Les Arts Décoratifs /  
 Photo: Charlaïne  
 Croguennec /  
 Hom project

The world of childhood and imagination are an introduction to the show. The visitor discovers, through the designer's first creations, his attraction to airplanes, birds, the world of the living, and technique. He is already developing, without knowing it, a methodology of creation and a relationship with material that involves exploration and manipulation. He reads, researches, reproduces, builds models, and dissects mechanical systems. He is interested in the resistance of materials, triangulation, notions that he does not yet understand but that already fascinate him. In this section, the exhibition displays sketches, drawings, models, and documents revealed as testimonies of the worlds he builds as a child. The exhibition revisits another of his passions, music, which is omnipresent. It is in celebration of music that he devotes, as early as 1985, one of his first creations: a lightened saxophone. Thanks to a new mouthpiece, an original truss mechanism inspired by the world of aviation, he revolutionizes the ergonomics of the instrument and thus the mobility of the musician.



5.



6.

The exhibition also brings to light the designer's unique, unprecedented experiments and techniques: lightweight, triangular structures and flexible "sandwiches". Iconic pieces of furniture such as the *Very Nice* chair (2003) in Balsa, which only weighs 700 grams, are exhibited. The material here is shaped like the architecture of an airplane wing, based on triangular structures, then covered with polyester film.

The show also reveals, in a separate project, Azambourg's work on the association and combination of materials. Chairs, tables, armchairs, but also luggage for Hermès, are made from what the designer calls a "soft sandwich". The latter combines soft foam clamped between two wooden or leather elements, that reveal the smooth quality of the furniture.

From the prototype to the failed attempts, the entire creative process is unveiled here, reaching only eventually its final result. It often leads to what Azambourg calls in French "loupés" or "ratés", in other words unsuccessful experiments, which ultimately become a source of inspiration that guide him to work the material further and to reveal its lightness.





7. François Azambourg —  
*Mesh Armchair*  
 2008  
 Prototype  
 Deployed steel sheet,  
 crumpled, steel tube base,  
 polyester thermosetting  
 © Les Arts Décoratifs /  
 Photo: Charline  
 Croguennec /  
 Hom project

8. François Azambourg —  
*Pixel Clock*  
 2015  
 Aluminum bee's nest,  
 fiberglass composite,  
 clock movement,  
 fluorescent tube, ballast,  
 carbon needle, metal and  
 wood structure  
 © Les Arts Décoratifs /  
 Photo: Christophe  
 Dellièrè

François Azambourg never stops questioning the flexibility of the industry. Produced without molds or in hollow structures, his creations emancipate themselves from traditional techniques such as the *Pack* textile chair (1998), inflated with polyurethane foam. Design, as a space for reflection, allows him to explore the world and develop new fields of action. Craft becomes, according to him, a laboratory for the industrial world. In 2006, Azambourg used sheet metal and imagined a new pattern, this time made of metal, which he inflated with foam. Over-expanded, the foam invaded the entire inside void, causing the welds to crack and the steel to wrinkle. Thus, the *Bugatti* chair, also born from a "loupé", will be adopted in all the colors of the major Italian racing car brands.

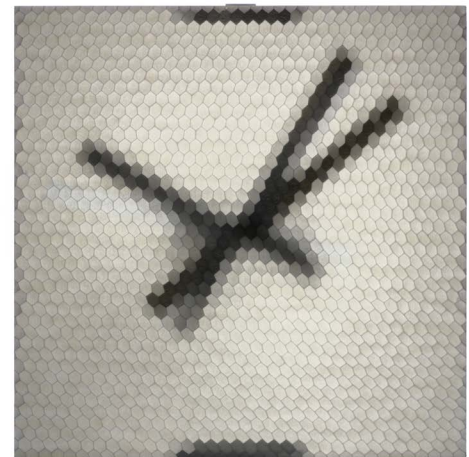
Wrinkling and folding, the designer delights in constraining the materials at hand. As in the vein of Serge Mouille and his metal forms, Azambourg designed seats made of mesh in 2008. Much like origami, by choosing to work with mesh through folding, he reinvented its plastic expression.

7.

The next galleries highlight the relationship that François Azambourg builds with the site in which he works. This is precisely the case when he creates the Douglas vase with the Centre International d'Art Verrier de Meisenthal located in the Vosges. Blown into a mold made of Douglas wood, the vase takes on the markings of its grain, expressing the very imprint of the surrounding nature.

The vases are similar but all unique, bearing the trace of the living and the spirit of a place. When, in 2015, he flew to Japan and settled in residence at the Villa Kujoyama, he seized the same spirit of the place and, as in Meisenthal, sought to probe the language of wood. He was interested in manufacturing scraps, especially wood chips, which became his favorite material. Through weaving, braiding, and gluing, Azambourg composed objects of absolute lightness and his creations led him to a new reflection on wood: split wood.

The exhibition ends with the close ties he maintains with the world of the living, an infinite source of inspiration. He observes the lives of termites and bees as well as those of machines. He is a pioneer in this field when he uses the potential of the beehive (2005) as early as the 2000s. The Musée des Arts Décoratifs, which preserves one of the richest and oldest collections of design in France, is happy to present to the public this important monograph dedicated to François Azambourg.



8.

# Useful information

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## — Press contacts

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## — Curator

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**Press preview on March 8, 2023  
(by invitation only)**

**#ExpoAzambourg**

## — Les Arts Décoratifs

Johannes Huth, President  
Sylvie Corréard, Chief executive  
officer  
Christine Macel, Adjunct chief  
executive officer, Director  
of Museums

## — Musée des Arts décoratifs

107 rue de Rivoli, 75001 Paris  
+33 (0) 1 44 55 57 50  
Métro: Palais-Royal, Pyramides,  
Tuileries

### Hours

Permanent collections:  
→ Tuesday to Sunday, 11 am–6 pm  
Temporary exhibitions:  
→ Tuesday and Wednesday,  
11 am–6 pm  
→ Open late on Thursdays until 9 pm

### Admission

→ General admission: € 14  
→ Concession: € 10  
→ Free for under 26

## — Musée Nissim de Camondo

63 rue de Monceau, 75008 Paris  
+33 (0) 1 53 89 06 40

### Hours

Open 10 am–5:30 pm  
Closed Monday and Tuesday

### Admission

→ General admission: € 12  
→ Concession: € 9  
→ Free for under 26

## — Library

111 rue de Rivoli, 75001 Paris  
+33 (0) 1 44 55 59 36  
Open Monday 1 pm–6 pm  
and Tuesday to Friday 10 am–6 pm

## — Publications and images

107 rue de Rivoli, 75001 Paris  
+33 (0) 1 44 55 57 68

## — Visitor engagement

### → Activities for individuals

Reservation via the online ticketing

### → Activities for groups

reservation@madparis.fr  
+33 (0) 1 44 55 57 66

### → Conferences, round tables and colloquiums

Reservation via the online ticketing  
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## — École Camondo

266 boulevard Raspail, 75014 Paris  
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## — Ateliers du Carrousel

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## — Bookshop & Gift Store

105 rue de Rivoli, 75001 Paris  
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Open 11 am–18:30 pm  
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Closed Monday

## — Loulou Restaurant

107 rue de Rivoli, 75001 Paris  
or access via the Carrousel gardens  
Open daily 12 pm–2 am  
+33 (0) 1 42 60 41 96

## — Le Camondo Restaurant

61 bis rue de Monceau, 75008 Paris  
Open Tuesday to Saturday from  
noon to midnight and Sunday during  
the day  
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## — Internet and social media

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