

# DEMISCH DANANT



THE WAY OF THE ESSENTIAL

SEPTEMBER 14 –  
OCTOBER 20, 2017

Jacques Dumond's apartment, Paris, 1960s

## **The Way of the Essential** **September 14 - October 20, 2017**

Beginning September 14, 2017, Demisch Danant will present *The Way of the Essential*, an exhibition that unfolds across three sections, each offering a distinct perspective on French minimalist design developed from the 1950s to early 1960s—a period marked by a harmonious melding of form, function and materials.

Modernity in France was promoted by a generation of designers through minimalist style; ornament was rejected in order to support the most simple and efficient concepts in furniture. Jacques Dumond was one of the pioneers of this movement and served as a liaison between an older generation of traditional interior designers and those exploring new materials and technologies post-war. Joseph-André Motte continued Dumond's concepts and remains a feature of everyday life through his large-scale designs of public spaces throughout France. Another wave of young designers like Antoine Philippon and Jacqueline Lecoq and Janine Abraham and Dirk Jan Rol followed, creating some of the most elegant and functional models of that era. Through this exhibition, connections and influences between the key figures and the younger generation that followed will emerge.

### **An Apartment by Jacques Dumond**

Jacques Dumond was one of the leading figures of the French modernist movement, exemplifying minimalism, functionalism, and a reductive approach towards ornamentation. The exhibition recreates a 1960s living room designed by Dumond with most of the furniture having the same provenance, an extraordinary find. Highlights include a pair of chairs that Dumond designed in 1961 for the Maison de la Radio (O.R.T.F.) and produced later by him for one of his private residence projects. A unique cabinet in Formica, two glass tables, sconces and a wall desk designed for the same residence will be presented as well. In a living setting, the simplicity of forms and elegant lines convey Dumond's minimalist approach to modernity in this period.

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### Joseph-André Motte

Motte's work represents the intersection of beauty and functionality in the face of an industrial society. He experimented widely with overlooked materials, including rattan. Motte once explained, "material is in charge, then imagination." The gallery will present a selection of Motte's designs in rattan, glass and plywood. The *Tripod Chair* (1949) was an early use of rattan for production furniture, followed by modular elements in rattan and glass.

### Antoine Philippon & Jacqueline Lecoq and Janine Abraham & Dirk Jan Rol

In this section, the gallery presents works by the younger generation of the French modernists, including husband and wife collaborators Antoine Philippon and Jacqueline Lecoq, and Janine Abraham and Dirk Jan Rol, who were influenced by Dumond and Motte, taking their principles steps further. Philippon and Lecoq designed with an almost puritanical sense of functionalism but always with a human, accessible quality achieved through the elegant handling of volume and lines, as well as a polychrome color scheme. Abraham and Rol, students of Jacques Dumond, had a more decorative flair, combining a tradition of craftsmanship with a decidedly contemporary approach—a blending of absolute precision with an almost quirky fantasy. In this, Abraham and Rol embody the best of the modernist spirit.

*The Way of the Essential* is the latest in an ongoing series of exhibitions curated by Demisch Danant to explore innovation and influences in French post-war design of the 1950s through 1970s.

### About the Designers

**Jacques Dumond** (1906–1988) was one of the first French modernists advocating pragmatism. He wanted to renew the means of expression of design in making "sensitive and humane, useful and beautiful, with what the industry had to offer." Dumond joined the Union des Artistes Modernes (U.A.M.)

in 1945, and was commissioned for other substantial projects including interiors for the French Embassy in Saarbrücken, Germany, 1954 and Maison de la Radio, Paris, 1962. In 1961, Dumond designed, in conjunction with his former student, Philippe Leloup, the "Salon Saint-Tropez," the largest public lounge aboard the SS *France* cruise liner, the international symbol of French luxury. Dumond influenced an entire post-war generation of designers with his vision of modernity and emphasis on experimentation with material. These included André Monpoix, Janine Abraham and Dirk Jan Rol, Roger Fatus, Étienne Fermigier, and Philippe Leloup, with whom he collaborated often in the 1960s.



Joseph-André Motte, *Tripod Chair*, 1949  
Enameled metal, rattan,  
28.35 H x 26.38 x 29.53 inches (72 H x 67 x 75 cm)



Antoine Philippon and Jacqueline Lecoq, *Coiffeuse*, 1962  
Laminate, aluminum, smoked glass, leather, cherry wood  
27.56 H x 61.02 x 20.08 inches (70 H x 155 x 51 cm)

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Born in Saint Bonnet in the Hautes-Alpes, **Joseph-André Motte** (1925–2013) studied applied arts in Paris under René Gabriel, Louis Sognot and Albert Guenot. By 1954, he founded the Atelier de recherche plastique (A.R.P.) with colleagues Pierre Guariche and Michel Mortier, as well as his own agency. Motte was later asked by the French administration to participate in grand public projects such as the interiors of airports at Orly, Roissy, and Lyon. He also participated in the renovation of the Grand Gallery at the Louvre and designed Presidents' desks under the demand of the Mobilier National. Still, Motte was even more renowned for his modern furniture designs. The *Tripod Chair* (1949), edited by Rougier, won the silver medal at the Milan Triennale and possessed a perfect simplicity of lines while still maintaining comfort. In 1963, for Uguine Gueugnon, Motte produced several prototypes in stainless steel as one of the first users in this material.

Inspired by the teachings of the modernist masters of the Union des Artistes Modernes (U.A.M.), **Antoine Philippon** (1930–1995) and **Jacqueline Lecoq** (b. 1932) employed modern materials and techniques to improve the daily life of French citizens in the challenging post-war climate. Their furniture combines minimalism with a pervasive sense of architectural refinement and elegance. The couple approached interiors with an almost puritanical sense of functionalism, but succeeded in creating extremely efficient environments that were still comfortable and inviting. They received numerous prestigious awards during their career including the 'René Gabriel' prize in 1961.

French artist **Janine Abraham** (1929–2005) met Dutch-born **Dirk Jan Rol** (b.1929) at the studio of Jacques Dumond in 1955, and they immediately "clicked," both personally and professionally. By 1956, they had showed their collaborative work, and in 1957 they opened their own firm, designing furniture in rattan, wood and metal. Rol provided the structural and architectural know-how, while Abraham contributed imagination. They realized the importance of mass produced modern furniture, but they were not willing to sacrifice solid workmanship. Their beautiful pieces incorporate a strong sense of line and space with a characteristic elegance.

### About Demisch Danant

Demisch Danant was founded in 2005 by Suzanne Demisch and Stephane Danant. The gallery specializes in twentieth century French design with an emphasis on the late 1950s through the 1970s and represents the work of Maria Pergay, Pierre Paulin, Joseph-André Motte, Pierre Guariche, Michel Boyer, Antoine Philippon and Jacqueline Lecoq, and René-Jean Caillette. Curated exhibitions on historical work are presented within environments that reference architecture and interiors of the era.

The gallery also features exhibitions concerning the intersection of architecture, design and art, including the work of Sheila Hicks, Felice Varini, Krijn de Koning, and César.

Demisch Danant is dedicated to research and scholarship on French design and has authored and published monographs including *Antoine Philippon and Jacqueline Lecoq* and *Maria Pergay: Complete Works 1957–2010*. Current projects include a comprehensive monograph on seminal designer Joseph-André Motte, and a new book about the architectural commission works of artist Sheila Hicks.

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