

# The 80s

## Martin Szekely

Vernissage on September 29, 2022

From September 30 to October 29, 2022

The Jousse entreprise gallery showcases Martin Szekely in its new exhibition. Matthias Jousse has spent three years preparing it. He rates Martin Szekely as one of the greatest international contemporary designers whose creations, except for his fashion works, are out of time. This exhibition combines around thirty items from the 80's that put forward a material and a color: metal and black.

The exhibition stars the *PI* must-see collection (1982-1986). It also shows items from the *Containers* series (1987), the collection that came after *PI* and produced by the Néotù gallery: *Presse Papier* storage, *Passif* coffee table, *Toro* chair, *Stoléru* sofa. The presentation also showcases seats and an ashtray drawn for the Hérouville theater, as well as a unique piece : the *Président* desk produced by the French editor Tribu. *Martin Szekely, the 80s* recounts the designer's early career, from the severe esthetics of a sharp line to the sensuality of volume and material.

Martin Szekely was not a beginner per say when he started drawing the *PI* collection. But it represents a milestone in his work. He talks about it as an «identity expression». *PI* is also the start of a lasting collaboration with the Néotù gallery - a fundamental place for the History of French design in the 80's and 90's - which showcased Szekely's work in 1985. The chaise longue was its starting point. To create it, the young designer who was just past 25, was given carte blanche by VIA in 1982, an association founded in 1979 and which mission was to «develop the research and promote innovation in furniture design»<sup>1</sup>. He wanted to produce the prototype of his deck chair using carbon fiber. But for technical reasons, it was finally built in sheet metal. The *PI* chaise longue will quickly become one of his most iconic creations of the decade. Its «drawing is so self-evident that it can be summarized in 5 pencil lines»<sup>2</sup>, -wrote Pierre Staudenmeyer, Néotù's founder.

With the next series, *Containers*, Martin Szekely took into account the volume and the «furniture's body»<sup>2</sup>, its relation with space, on the floor and on the walls. The objects got thicker. The metal, even though still present, was not the main material anymore. The designer experimented with medium - also known as MDF (Medium Density Fiberboard) - to create five storage units, amongst which *Presse-papier*, the main item of the collection showcased at Jousse entreprise. He chose not to hide the material, using only varnish as a finishing touch. He also explored the concepts of padding and surfacing with the *Stoléru* sofa. The straight spiky lines that remain in the *Stoléru* sofa and the *Passif* coffee table drawings meet the softness of the curve.

Some items from the two first collections endorsed by Néotù at the time have entered museum collections. For instance, the *PI* chaise longue and gueridon are now part of the Centre national des arts plastiques (CNAP)/ Fonds national des arts plastiques (FNAC)' collections. The *PI* chaise longue and bookcase as well as the *Stoléru* sofa are part of the Centre Pompidou's collections. The *Stoléru* sofa can also be seen at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London.

<sup>1</sup> Via Design 3.0. 1979-2009. 30 ans de création de mobilier, co-édition Centre Pompidou/V.I.A., Paris 2009

<sup>2</sup> Martin Szekely, meublier-designer, éd. AFAA (Association française d'action artistique), Paris 1995