The Musée des Arts Décoratifs et du Design opens an exhibition devoted to the work of the designer Martin Szekely.

BORDEAUX.- The Musée des Arts Décoratifs et du Design has invited the designer Martin Szekely to show his work in its new exhibition space, a former jail located behind the hôtel de Lalande. The event offers the public an opportunity to discover some 40 pieces by the designer, united under the theme of "Construction." Created between 1881 and 2018 (the most recent, The Drawers and I, can be seen at the museum for the first time), the objects and pieces of furniture seem to reinvent their own composition: all are the result of a structural challenge.

For Martin Szekely, construction is the very essence of the designer’s profession:

“I perceive my activity from the point of view of the builder and the use that will be made of what I build, which by definition involves the users, their bodies and their environment. Involving the user necessarily evokes the history of modes of use. And building – which is the role of the designer, opposed to the artist, for whom ideas alone can suffice – evokes the history of structures and their underlying technologies.”

The goal of the exhibition is to present, through a historical and thematic effort, the singular path pursued by this major designer.

Experimenting with all materials, both new and traditional, Martin Szekely approaches each project as a fresh start, a re-examination. His pieces light on physical principles that question our relation to the material world. Within the space, his furniture and objects reveal their mathematical p late concept of the minimum, whether visual or structural, as something that can be shared by everyone.

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Born in 1956, Martin Szekely studied at the École Boulle and École Estienne. He gained attention for his first furniture collection, Pi, developed between 1982 and 1985 with the backing of the VIA (Valorization of Innovation in Furnishing), which gave him carte blanche for the project. The Pi lounge became one of his emblematic creations. Since then, Szekely has been active in all aspects of design: industrial, urban and environmental, with pure research. Today he is one of the most prominent figures in French design.

After an early period during which he created pieces in a highly expressive "drawn" style, exhibiting them at Galerie Neotù, in the 1990s his approach evolved toward a practice emphasizing economy of means. Seeking to dispense with all personal expression, which he considered superfluous, Szekely has elaborated this approach from project to project, beginning to base his process on the culture of the object, its mode of production and its intended use. He began to see his job as the reconciliation of objective elements linked to the function and practical use of the object. Szekely has elaborated this approach from project to project, creating collections exhibited at Galerie Neotù from 1999 through 2013 and currently shown at Blondeau & Cie in Geneva, the galleries Salon 94 in New York, and Pierre Marie Giraud in Brussels, and, in the autumn of 2017, the Hôtel de Clermont-Tonnerre in Paris.

In 2011, the Centre Pompidou hosted the exhibition Ne Plus Dessiner (“No More Drawing”), the first major monograph devoted to Martin Szekely’s French museum, and in a sense an extension of the retrospective of his work seen at Grand Hornu, Belgium in 1998.

Today, with the exhibition Construction, the Musée des Arts Décoratifs et du Design is sharing with the public some 40 pieces by this illustrious designer, more than one quarter of which have never before been seen in a French public institution.

Szekely’s pieces are included in the collections of many major national and international museums, including the Musée National d’Art Moderne/ de Création Industrielle, Centre Pompidou, Paris; the Fonds National d’Art Contemporain, Paris; the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris; MAC’s / $ Grand Hornu, Bouissu (Belgium); the Musée d’Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean, Luxembourg; the Museum do Design e da Moda, Lisbon; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; the Winterthur Museum, Winterthur (Delaware, USA); the Isra Museum, Jerusalem; the Victoria & Albert Museum, London; and the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Montréal.

In 2010, JRP|Ringier (Zurich) published Martin Szekely, a book retracing his production from 1998 to 2010, with an essay by Elisabeth Lebovici.


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