

Galerie

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At Galerie Gabriel, Postwar Design's Global Paths Come Into Focus

Zeroing in on the global migrations of Jean Royère and Roberto Platé, an ambitious new presentation curated by Andre Mellone brings together midcentury artists and designers whose transcontinental journeys fostered rich cultural exchange

By Ryan Waddoups



Installation view of "Crossed Trajectories: Jean Royère, Roberto Platé, and the Global Journey of Designers and Artists" at Galerie Gabriel, New York. PHOTO: BILLAL TARIGHT

In the decades following World War II, many of the world's most illustrious creative talents embraced itinerant lifestyles in search of freedom and transformation. Take Gio Ponti, who, on an unassuming Caracas hillside, realized the spectacular Villa Planchart that fully exemplifies the Milanese maestro's sensual modernism. Jean Royère also embodied this nomadic spirit. After establishing his name in midcentury Paris with biomorphic

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furniture endowed with playful panache, he journeyed to far-flung locales across the Middle East and South America, where much of his most prestigious work materialized: the French Consulate in Alexandria, the Senate building in Tehran, hotels in Cairo and Beirut, and furniture fashioned with cane and rattan.



Nancy Gabriel and Andre Mellone. PHOTO: ENRIQUE SHORE

These transatlantic odysseys are the foundation of “Crossed Trajectories: Jean Royère, Roberto Platé, and the Global Journey of Designers and Artists,” a thought-provoking new exhibition at Galerie Gabriel in New York. Organized by founder Nancy Gabriel in collaboration with CMS Collection and curated by interior designer Andre Mellone, the show unpacks and reframes the migratory global currents that shaped postwar creative production. Mellone and Gabriel gathered over 100 works across furniture, lighting, and painting and placed them in dialogue within her soaring Upper East Side gallery, weaving together stories that recast modernism as a grand adventure where Europe and Latin America mirror, challenge, and influence each other.



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That exchange finds resonance today and explains why Gabriel found an ideal collaborator in Mellone, a history-minded aesthete taking on his first curatorial project. Mellone, who was born in Brazil and visited Roman ruins while an architecture student at Syracuse University, now helms an award-winning New York interiors firm that

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intermingles rich cultural references (his home country's ecological modernism, rigorous Bauhausian geometries, Art Deco ornamentation) in exquisitely layered residences and retail spaces. "Andre instinctively understands this cultural dialogue and embodies the exchange we wanted to explore," says Gabriel. "He brings deep respect for history but interprets it through a contemporary lens."

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NANCY GABRIEL

Mellone's deep understanding of design history courses through the curation, which eschews traditional vignettes in favor of free-flowing layouts that honor each piece's idiosyncrasies while embracing the exchange. "The idea was to create distilled settings—not overly decorated or accessorized—that would highlight the strength of each design," he muses, citing hotel lobbies and office waiting rooms as his blueprints. An avid drawer and painter, Mellone also studied original Royère sketches and sought to mimic their refined yet exuberant minimalism, even enlisting Nordic Knots to lend vivid, color-blocked rugs that provide buoyant visual anchors.



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Within these unexpected vignettes, a cross-continental sequence emerges. Many of the furnishings converse with one another through material and structure, owing to Brazil's status as a magnet for émigré midcentury designers—Jorge Zalsupin, Martin Eisler, Carlo Hauner, Giuseppe Scapinelli—who blended European training with native hardwoods and traditional handicraft. Royère, for example, relates naturally to Scapinelli and Zanine Caldas despite being “complete opposites,” Mellone observes. “There’s a very beautiful tree trunk as a table next to the most refined Royère pieces, yet they seem like they belong together.” Earthy jacaranda furnishings by Joaquim Tenreiro, for example, meet ottomans by Maria Pergay, who bent steel into graceful undulations—a pairing that captures the show’s globetrotting spirit.



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Mellone found himself drawn to new discoveries along the way. He became particularly taken with Argentine painter Roberto Platé's blotchy abstractions, many made in Paris during a self-imposed exile after dictator Juan Carlos Onganía censored his 1968 show at the Instituto Di Tella in Buenos Aires. Platé's son, Alexander, who oversees his estate, assisted with installation and shared insights about his father's time abroad, including how two canvases at the entrance were painted during a period in New York. "I had great conversations with him about his father," Mellone says. "He was inspired by architecture and columns, but the paintings stand on their own. He has an incredible sense of scale, and his use of color and texture is extraordinary."

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"Crossed Trajectories" closes the distance between these varied paths. Its focus on travel and relocation shows how postwar creative work grew from movement rather than fixed schools or regional identities. In the gallery, the dialogue between European and Latin American voices gains strength through proximity—continuity that Gabriel

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captures succinctly. “Even if you combine works from different designers or continents, when there’s true thought, knowledge, and culture behind them, they communicate,” she says. “What links them is intentionality.”



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“Crossed Trajectories: Jean Royère, Roberto Platé, and the Global Journey of Designers and Artists” is on view at Galerie Gabriel (430 East 58th Street, New York).