

Peter Marino

Tastemaker, New York

Peter Marino is a brand name in super high-end interior design, and is perhaps best known for his luxurious residential projects and his successful retail designs for iconic names in the fashion world including Fendi, Valentino, Chanel, Louis Vuitton and more. His work for private clients includes furnishing with everything from Dupré-Lafon to the Lalannes and his choices are known to broadly influence the markets.

Start of his career

I worked for Andy Warhol and then I worked for Arman, over 25 years ago, so my career has been with artists from the very start. Andy is the one who put me into business at the beginning of my career. I did the Factory, which was located on the north side of Union Square, and then I did his house on 66th Street. That was 1978, my first year of business.

Then I did Fred Hughes' house on Lexington Avenue, which was the house where Andy and his mother had lived for 20 years when they came to New York. Fred Hughes was Andy's business manager and the person who seriously made Andy into a business – the art machine that he became, the Silver Factory and all that – because Andy was not that until after Fred got hold of him. Luckily for me, I let Fred get hold of me too, and that's how I met the Agnellis, the Rothschilds and all the others, because they were all going to the Factory to have their portraits done.

Guess how I was paid back then? Paintings. Today, the eleven Warhols on my walls are all from that time; the ones you see in the reception area are all signed “to Peter” on the backs. It did not cost him a thing.

The best part of the story is that I had said to him: “But Andy, you know, I need some money.” I was just starting off and I had to pay my rent and I said: “I can't just take *art*, I mean, I've got to eat, I've got to...” So he gave me a check for \$100 for expenses and as he signed the check, he said: “Peter, if I were you I wouldn't cash that check, some day my signature is going to be worth a lot more than this check.” And I thought, “You're such a scam artist, screw you,” and I ran to the bank to cash the \$100 and went out to eat. And of course he was right because the check written to “Peter

Jean Royère

Liane five-branch wall lamp, ca. 1960,
wrought iron with paper shades,
86 3/4 in. (220 cm) high

Marino, Architect, Andy Warhol” would have been worth thousands, it would have been worth a lot to me even now...it’s so funny.

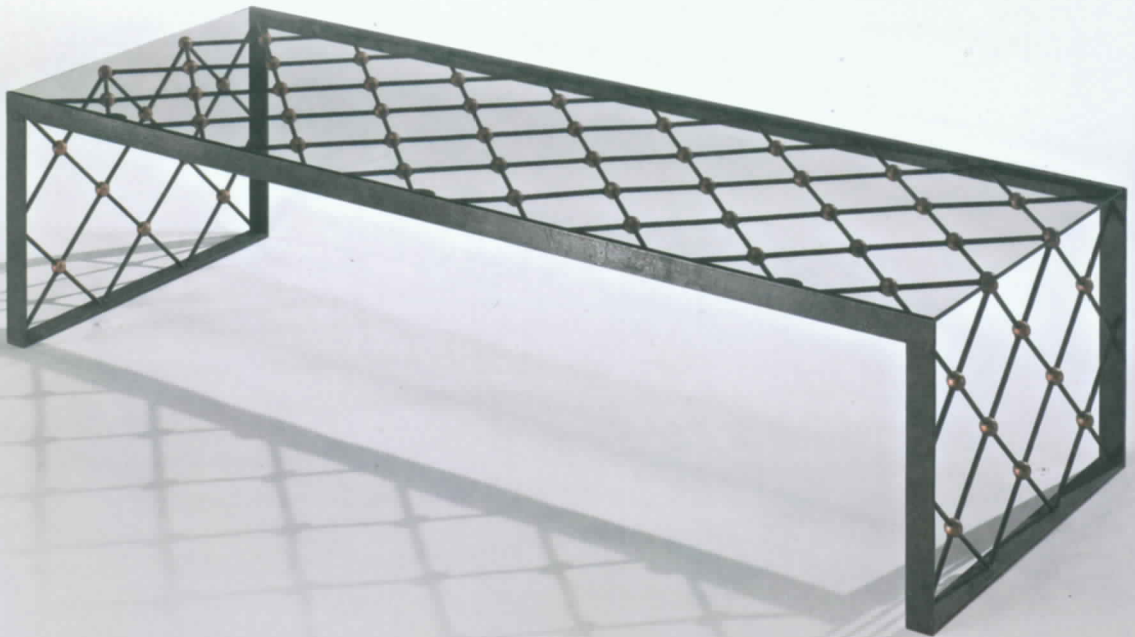
Warhol collected furniture the way he collected everything – for trading; he was the original Trader Vic. He had works of Cy Twombly and Roy Lichtenstein and Frank Stella and so many others, and it was all through trades. The artists in those days, in the 1960s and 1970s would trade, so his painting collection was spectacular, and he would trade whatever he could with all the dealers, too.

The design boom

Definitely, the trend that is great right now is that the separate worlds of decorative arts and fine arts are overlapping. We see it with designers who are having gallery shows, although a lot of it started in the late 1980s, with Michael Graves and others doing teapots and dishes.

In fact, architects always did these things, so I view it now that we are simply returning to the way it was in 1900. For example, Wiener Werkstätte did everything – vases, silverware, knives and forks, they did buildings, chairs, anything that people used in their daily lives. Because of America’s strength in technology and engineering in World War II, there was an enormous breach when architecture took the deep swing towards engineering, and the breach was between architects doing engineering, and others doing work like designing a chair. I always considered interior architecture as valid as exterior architecture – it is all architecture, I do not make the distinction.

“Those gorgeous veneers from the 1930s do not exist, even if you stand on your head and spit million-dollar bills.”





Marc Newson

Medium lathed table, 2006, white Carrara marble, 30 ¼ x 47 ¼ in. (77 x 119.9 ø cm)

The principles of design apply to everything; in fact, architecture was known as one of the “applied arts”, which is a very interesting term. As I said, after World

War II engineering went off in one direction and the art niche got left to a few people doing curtains. It was really awful. There was such a gulf that it led to a huge rise in non-architects, now known as “interior designers”, doing interiors and furniture, and these designers ended up doing things that didn’t exist before. So I think it’s a really good trend that architects today are again being asked to deal with everyday items, they are taking furniture and interiors more seriously.

On the other hand, not everybody is good at everything. There are some dress designers who can do anything, like Karl Lagerfeld, and there are other dress designers who should really stick to doing dresses. Different people have different ranges of talent, of course. My point is simply that today’s public is more open to architects working in areas other than traditional architecture.

Comparing new and old

When it comes to contemporary designers, the rule of fashion enters the picture. They are *in* fashion at the moment. If you ask for a \$200,000 piece from Ron Arad and then ask me about a signed piece of Martin Carlin furniture, why would that go for only \$1 million? Martin Carlin was the great French furniture designer from the 1770s and 1780s, so if the Carlin piece is worth \$1 million, then the Ron Arad piece is not bad at \$200,000.

Looking at a scale of the last 300 years, one sees a nice kind of calibration there. If today’s pieces are great works of art that you *think* will last forever, that you are truly interested in,

Jean Royère

Tour Eiffel coffee table, ca. 1947, steel, bronze and glass, 13 ¼ x 51 ½ x 21 ¾ in. (35 x 130 x 55.3 cm)