

WORDS WITH... [CHARLES ZANA](#)

Sense of craft

Tunisia-born, Paris-based architect and interior designer Charles Zana has taken over an apartment on Rue de Rivoli this week for an exhibition called *In Situ*. It features more than 30 of his creations, as well as pieces from his private collection, including ceramics by Italian designer Ettore Sottsass. “It’s a way for me to reveal myself a little more, to show my taste and my attachment to Paris and art,” says Zana. “That’s the spirit of *In Situ*: a simple, free and ephemeral way to present our creations in a vast space, in dialogue with art and the city itself.” Standouts from the exhibition include the sculptural and monumental Sara Sofa, upholstered in a teddy mohair by Pierre Frey, and light sconces made from white plaster, which bring a poetic touch to the space. Visitors can also linger over an espresso and a croissant by pastry chef Yann Couvreur at the Charles Zana coffee pop-up.



Which movement or designer has influenced you the most?

I'm influenced by major artistic movements and great creative eras rather than small, isolated ones. Nineteen-thirties France is a huge inspiration. It was a time of incredible creative energy, when everything felt alive and connected, from art and music to dance and literature. I've also been inspired by the Los Angeles art scene of the 1970s and 1980s. And then there's Ettore Sottsass, who was a key figure in the Italian Radical movement of the 1970s. He broke down the boundaries between art and design, bringing together two worlds that had long seemed separate. That idea of crossing disciplines continues to resonate with me.

The sky's the limit: which piece of furniture would you love to own?

There are so many pieces in my pantheon of dream furniture, including a lacquered daybed by Eileen Gray, a totem by Ettore Sottsass and a sofa by Jean-Michel Frank.

A recurring source of inspiration?

Nature. It might sound simple but it's truly essential to me – in form but also in colour. Over time, I've realised that I only use tones that exist in the wild: soft sage greens, autumnal shades and warm beiges – nothing artificial. Andrea Branzi was the first to open my eyes to the idea of bringing nature into design. For *In Situ*, we created pieces made from recomposed oak logs in collaboration with Maison Charlois.



A favourite project that you've worked on?

I'm currently working on a Spanish-style house on a private island near Miami. It's a project that really inspires me. It captures the city's Hispanic and Cuban spirit: that tropical atmosphere, the light, the lush vegetation. There's also a major landscape component, with a beautiful garden designed by a talented landscape architect. I love bringing a touch of French sensibility into foreign contexts. It's always incredibly stimulating.

A priority for you and the industry going forward?

Supporting our artisans – the people who we have been working with for years and keep furniture-making alive in France. We really need to protect this ecosystem of ateliers and craftspeople, who continue to create for us and with us.

Which city has the best design scene? And where should we visit?

Paris is the capital of design. It's home to the largest number of interior-architecture studios working internationally. There's also an incredibly dynamic art scene – and art and design always go hand in hand. Paris is full of galleries specialising in specific eras but also those that have rediscovered and championed great designers such as Eileen Gray. And then there's a truly unique institution: the Musée des Arts Décoratifs. It's one of the only museums in the world entirely dedicated to decorative arts and design, with a deep historical perspective.

'In Situ' runs until Sunday 26 October at 242 Rue de Rivoli, Paris.