

Pierre Frey Launches a Chic New David/Nicolas Furniture Collection

Home furnishings inspired by transatlantic liners provide a whole new way to virtually travel

By Alia Akkam
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An assortment of designs from the new collection, including a rug, loveseat, chair, Ottoman, and series of small tables. Photo: Vincent Leroux

French designer René Prou fashioned 20th-century interiors that harmoniously fused traditional and modernist motifs. Among them was a dining room for the Waldorf Astoria New York and plush Orient Express train compartments. But it was Prou's chic, clean-lined spaces on mammoth 1930s transatlantic liners like the *Colombie* and *Normandie* that inspired Verso, the forthcoming furniture collection from Pierre Frey.

Patrick Frey, head of the Parisian fabric house his father founded in 1935 (which has since expanded into wallpaper, carpets and rugs, accessories, and yes, furniture), is Prou's grandson. It therefore makes sense that Prou's archives proved to be a natural starting point for Sam Baron, the recently appointed artistic director of

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Pierre Frey's furniture department. Eager for his debut offerings to be innovative, yet "true to the DNA of Pierre Frey," Baron was drawn to Prou's vintage travel aesthetic and its timeless allure. The brilliance of this two-bedroom home lies in its feeling both lived-in and polished. This is because Khandwala believes in enhancing how one chooses to live. "Design is so intuitive," he says. "Once you have it in your DNA, you go about it in a very natural way. Rather than thinking too hard about how one should live, instead you think about how one is living." From room to room, Khandwala has focused on blending pieces, presenting harmonious and multitextured scenes. This begins in the entrance, which combines the gel of the 1960s table from designer Wendell Castle and the leather of the Mauritanian rug from RW Guild. Throughout, the bones of this loftlike home—which include industrial details, like dark-colored columns and glass doors—have been eased with delicate choices, including the hand-blown glass light fixture from designer Jeff Zimmerman that crowns the home office.

To realize this, Khandwala builds his rooms up from the floor. "I think it's important to have the right rug in the room," he notes. "I feel like it's the foundation of the room." From there, he works around the space, decorating the ceilings and the walls before considering the furnishings. "My mind has always been inclined to think in layers," he adds. This process is seen in the living room, which features a grand Turkish oushak rug from the 1700s. Its tones, including blushes and bronzes, have been translated in the furnishings. The couch from Liaigre has been re-covered in rose-colored linen, and the three tables from designer Gloria Cortina reflect the golden hues. Even the pops—such as the custom pillows from textile makers Hechizoo and Makrosha—live inside this scheme.

To help reinterpret that mood in a contemporary manner, he brought on the "retro-futuristic" Beirut design studio David/Nicolas. All of the solid oak "sculptural and imposing" pieces comprising Verso are made by hand in the Pierre Frey workshop in Villers-Cotterêts, France. The seating is upholstered in mohair or a reissued fabric emblazoned with an animated Prou pattern.

David Raffoul, who runs David/Nicolas with Nicolas Moussallem, says to AD PRO that the duo designed Verso as furniture they would put into their own home. They made it "look sleek and simple," featuring some notable details, such as the brass knobs that "are a bit like jewels," Raffoul explains. "But you're not just going to look at it. You're going to use it."

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The back of one chair doubles as a bookshelf. Photo: Vincent Leroux

Suited for more compact rooms, Verso doesn't just channel a grand era of travel—it's functional and modular. Each piece is imbued with multiple possibilities. One version of the lounge chair, for example, incorporates gleaming drawers and a folding top that allows it to easily morph into a dressing table, writing desk, or minibar. Any configuration is bolstered by a matching pouf-cum-footrest and petite coffee table that complement a curvaceous statement sofa. "We like beautiful things," says Raffoul. "We want these pieces to add value, personality, and a bit of sexiness."

Baron also designed two pedestal tables and a clever folding screen containing a built-in shelf that melds its wood base with wallpaper, stretched fabric, and caning. A rug, which flaunts one of Prou's bold geometric designs, fittingly completes the collection. "There are a lot of companies, they put velvet on their furniture and they think it's glamorous. But glamour comes from a lifestyle and how people interact with furniture, where they eat, where they sit and write a small poem," says Moussallem.

Baron agrees, pointing out that Verso was launched as a way to strengthen the connection between design and "the French way of living, of comfort, and of generosity. This is furniture that could have existed in the past and will still be relevant 50 years from now. True quality is related to life's different moments."