



BY DESIGN

Charlotte Perriand

Her furniture designs were revolutionary responses, both aesthetic and practical, to Modern architecture. Perriand changed the course of industrial design.

WRITTEN BY *David Masello*

Some architects think of furniture as architecture. And some architects, such as Charlotte Perriand (1903–1999), design furniture that has an architectural presence within a room.

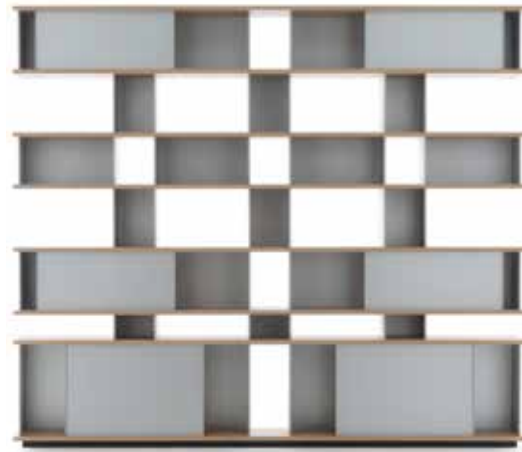
At a time in the 1920s and '30s when a female architect was as rare as a Greek Revival pediment on a Modernist edifice, the French-born Perriand was collaborating with the most important design talent of the time, notably Le Corbusier. As a young woman, trained as an architect and industrial designer at the Ecole de l'Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs, she showed her portfolio of furniture and decorative objects to the famous architect, who immediately brought her into his atelier.

Though her unique design language began to emerge in the late 1920s, it wasn't until the 1940s, following extended trips to Japan, that her now-iconic modular cupboards, bookshelves, and other furnishings resulted. She was captivated by making furniture that could be thoroughly adaptable—to room settings and to individual aesthetic tastes. Her shelving units were designed to be affixed to walls, with recesses of varying heights and widths, capable of holding books, as well as a variety of objects. Embracing classic Modernist materials and forms, her unadorned furnishings were defined by a rigid, colorful geometry, while remaining adaptable and flexible.

Her goal for every furnishing she designed was, as she wrote, to be of a “free form that gives rhythm to space and enhances the objects it supports.” ■



GALERIE HALF/SHADE DEGGES



Top: Original Charlotte Perriand pieces remain much coveted, including her modular steel and oak *Bibliothèque* and *Bahut Commande*, made in France in 1956, available at **Galerie Half** in Los Angeles. Left: **Cassina** continues to manufacture her *Nuage* designs, with this highly architectural shelving unit among the most popular.