

EXHIBITIONS

Hubert Le Gall's Fanciful World Comes to Life at Twenty First Gallery

A show of the French artist and designer's work debuts along with a new monograph

By [Gay Gassmann](#)

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Ferriere, a commode in ebony with hand-painted bronze flowers made by Hubert Le Gall in 2017, part of an exhibition of his work at Twenty First Gallery.

Photo: Bruno Simon

Tribeca's [Twenty First Gallery](#) is kicking off the New Year with the first U.S. retrospective of French artist and designer Hubert Le Gall, already a household name among design insiders the world over. The show offers visitors an opportunity to discover Le Gall's world of animals, flowers, and delightful snapshots from his imagination. On view will be a range of works, from lighting to tables, case pieces, seating, and objects. AD PRO caught up with Le Gall in Paris the night before he boarded his flight to New York for his show, which opens this Friday, February 8.

When asked how his creative career began, Le Gall launches into a story beginning when he was a child, growing up in a traditional, bourgeois French family in Lyon. "I did all the expected studies, as my father wanted, but I always made furniture, from a very young age," Le Gall recalls. "My dream was to be an architect, but I was expected to be a lawyer. I was 25 when I realized I wasn't living my life and I had to find out what I wanted to do."

Le Gall moved to Paris once his studies were complete. "I was alone in Paris in a small flat and I started to make things, to create my world," he says. "At that time, Andrée Putman was popular—everything was black and white. That's when I made my first flower table—very out of fashion!"



Hubert Le Gall.

Photo: Pascaline Noack

As a designer, Le Gall is self-taught, and has been learning along the way. Indeed, he is hesitant even to give himself the label of designer: "I am just creating because of my desire to create," he says.



Hubert le Gall, *Placide le lapin câlin* armchair in faux fur, wool, and varnished wood, 2012.

Photo: Bruno Simon

He has always been interested in what he calls “total art,” like the Arts and Crafts movement in Britain and the Wiener Werkstätte in Vienna in the 1900s. “My vision is that all of my furniture is about sculpture,” he says. “I want to make functional art and be sure that all of my work tells a story.” Le Gall also feels a special affinity with historic pieces from Pompeii and the 18th and 19th centuries. “I like to give a wink to Greece and classical antiquity,” he says.



Le Gall's new book, co-written with Pamela Mullin.

Le Gall's pieces are playful and fanciful, but always functional. The current exhibition evokes three distinct moments in his career of 25 years: his poetic animal world, a more fantastic world, and an abstract one. Concurrent with the show is a new monograph of his work called *Fabula*, which is a labor of love between the artist and one of his devoted American collectors, Pamela Mullin. Together, they worked to fill her house in Normandy, France, with creations by Le Gall.



The *Bubbles II* glass sconce.

Photo: Courtesy of Twenty First Gallery

In addition to working as an artist, Le Gall is also an accomplished and prolific exhibition designer. He has designed more than 150 exhibitions throughout his career (15 within the past year alone), in such spots as the Musée d'Orsay in Paris and the Museo di Capodimonte in Naples, Italy. He loves the museum work, which he considers to be a kind of education in handling objects and works of art.

When asked how he works, he is quick to state proudly, "I started with one assistant 25 years ago and we still work together today. We work with craftsmen all over France, but we are only five in the studio and this is the way I want to keep it."



Hubert Le Gall, L'Eternel Printemps cabinet in the shape of a horse, 2018.

Photo: Pascaline Noack

Given the residential nature of his work, does he live with his pieces? "I do, but I also collect," he says. "I have a table by André Dubreuil and a piece by Patrick Naggar. I also collect ceramics—a lamp like a bird, a vase like a rabbit, Lalanne of course, and Jouve."

And thinking ahead, what would he like to do? Le Gall pauses and then references a bronze horse cabinet in the exhibition. "This is what I call a mature work, more sculptural, and this is where I am going," he says. "I will also be having a solo show in the iconic Villa Kérylos in the south of France in 2020."

Beyond that, Le Gall says, "my vision for the future is to keep the pleasure of creating."