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Sculpture Meets Structure at “Chamberlain/Prouvé,” Now at New York’s Gagosian Gallery

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A John Chamberlain sculpture inside Jean Prouvé’s Villejuif Demountable House, on view at Gagosian Gallery.

Patrick Seguin and Larry Gagosian may have found the closest thing to a match made in exhibition heaven. On Friday, Gagosian’s 24th Street location in Manhattan opened its doors to “Chamberlain/Prouvé,” a joint exhibition of American sculptor John Chamberlain and French architect-designer-engineer Jean Prouvé. Executed in collaboration with Paris’s Galerie Patrick Seguin, the show features two fully erected Prouvé prefab houses, numerous Chamberlain assemblages of varying size, and models and parts of additional Prouvé works.

Prouvé’s innovative approach to architecture, which he famously viewed as “no different” than furniture, largely introduced the notion of industrialized, prefabricated buildings in the early 1940s, a movement to which contemporary architecture owes a certain debt. “Prouvé’s work is modern and incarnate,” explains Seguin, “the perfect equation between the formal accuracy of the object and the way it has to inscribe itself into his time and in longevity.”

This longevity is perhaps best demonstrated in the way that Prouvé's work plays off of Chamberlain's, created six decades later. Their most obvious connecting thread is material: steel. For Prouvé, steel was the structural backbone of his buildings, a graceful exoskeleton to be finished in bold color. For Chamberlain, the material was malleable and energetic; his sculptures have the appearance of storybook cars crumpled in a giant's hand, their intertwining colors forming gestural arrangements. Seen together, the works demonstrate the wide range of their material, investigate the dialogue of art through history, and celebrate the relationship between two masters and their shared medium.

Through April 4 at Gagosian Gallery, 555 West 24th St., New York; gagosian.com.