

The New York Times

THURSDAY, JANUARY 31, 2008

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A Tropical House on Stilts Touches Down in London



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When Christie's announced last June that André Balazs, the New York hotelier, was the winning bidder in an auction for Maison Tropicale, the 1951 prefabricated house prototype by the French designer Jean Prouvé that was on view in Long Island City, the natural question was, What will he do with it? For now, Mr. Balazs is lending it for public view; beginning Tuesday, it can be seen outside the Tate Modern museum in London.

One of only three such structures built by Prouvé for French colonial officers in Africa, the aluminum-paneled building was originally installed in Brazzaville, the Con-

go Republic. Propped on stilts, it was intended for industrial manufacture as well as a tropical climate — to which Mr. Balazs, who paid \$4.97 million for the house, hopes to return it. “The idea is it will eventually end up as the centerpiece of some sort of environmentally sound resort,” said Mr. Balazs, who is planning to develop such a property in Central America. The house will be at the Tate Modern (011-44-20-7887-8888 or tate.org.uk) until April 13, in conjunction with a Prouvé exhibition at the Design Museum in London (011-44-870-833-9955 or designmuseum.org).

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