

Andrée Putman : Your Best Career Move Can Come at 53



Pre - Reading

A. Warm-Up Questions

1. Do you believe it's harder to change careers after 50? Why or why not?
2. What does "reinvention" mean in a professional context?
3. Can limitations (age, budget, experience gaps) ever become advantages?

B. Vocabulary Preview

Match up as many words and meanings as you can.

Check this exercise again after seeing the words in context on page 2.

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| 1. ___ trajectory | a) a unique and recognizable style or creative look. |
| 2. ___ democratizing | b) to carefully choose and organize items, ideas, or products. |
| 3. ___ reinvent | c) extremely famous, and seen as a symbol of excellence or importance. |
| 4. ___ resurrect | d) the general direction or path your career or life is taking over time. |
| 5. ___ aesthetic | e) to bring something back into use after it has been forgotten. |
| 6. ___ timeless | f) to change yourself or your career in order to start something new. |
| 7. ___ curate | g) what a person leaves behind after they die, such as ideas, or influence. |
| 8. ___ iconic | h) reduce your work or activity, often before stopping completely. |
| 9. ___ wind down | i) never going out of style. |
| 10. ___ legacy | j) the idea of making something (like design or art) available and affordable for many people, not just the rich. |

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Discussion

(INT - HIGH INT)

Reading

*Reinvention, Design &
Career Longevity*

1. If you think your career **trajectory** is set in stone by the time you hit 50, allow me to introduce you to Andrée Putman. She didn't start as a designer. She spent her early career in journalism and fashion. In her 30s, while working at the French retailer Prisunic, she found her mission: **curating** "beautiful things for nothing." Long before "**democratizing** design" became a corporate buzzword, Putman was actually doing it—making artful, cultural objects accessible to the public rather than locking them away for the elite.
2. But here is where her story shifts from interesting to **iconic**. At the age of 53, most people are thinking about **winding down**. Andrée Putman was just getting started. She founded Écart International, a company dedicated to **resurrecting** forgotten designers from the 1920s and 1930s. In doing so, she didn't just reissue furniture; she rewrote design history.
3. That **reinvention** catapulted her onto the global stage. Soon, she was applying her signature **aesthetic**—radical simplicity, the dance between black and white, and a daring mix of "rich and poor" materials—to spaces that would define an era.
4. When she designed the interiors of Morgans Hotel in New York, she didn't just decorate a room; she invented the concept of the "boutique hotel." She proved that a lobby could tell a story.
5. Putman's **legacy** is a powerful reminder that creativity doesn't expire. It evolves. Her work teaches us that true style is **timeless**, not trendy, and that limitations (like starting late) can be reframed as opportunities.
6. Today, her daughter Olivia carries the torch at Studio Putman, proving that an ethos of clarity, humor, and narrative depth is the ultimate inheritance. The lesson? Whether you are 25 or 55, your next act might just be your greatest.

"Minimalism in interior design has become a caricature — everywhere you find shops or hotels with an ambience that makes you feel like you are in a refrigerator."

— Andrée Putman

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Comprehension

Discuss these questions in pairs, and write the answers below.

1. What was Putman's early career?

2. What was her mission at Prisunic?

3. Why was founding Écart International significant?

4. How did the design of Morgans Hotel change the hospitality industry?

5. What role does Olivia Putman now play at Studio Putman?

Vocabulary Review

A. Complete the Sentences

Complete the sentences using vocabulary from page 1.
You may need to change the word forms.

1. The museum curator worked hard to _____ a collection that tells a clear story about modern French design.
2. Even though the furniture was created in the 1930s, its simple lines make it feel completely _____ today.
3. After 30 years in banking, he chose to slowly _____ and spend more time mentoring young entrepreneurs.
4. The designer's greatest _____ was not just her buildings, but the way she changed how people think about space.
5. By offering affordable home décor to a wider audience, the company helped _____ good design.
6. The young architect studied the designer's career _____ and realized that her biggest success came later in life.

B. Odd One Out

Circle the word that does NOT belong in the group.

- | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| 1. a) reinvent
b) transform
c) trajectory | 3. a) timeless
b) revive
c) resurrect | 5. a) timeless
b) democratize
c) classic | 7. a) career path
b) trajectory
c) resurrect |
| 2. a) influence
b) affordable
c) legacy | 4. a) curate
b) select
c) iconic | 6. a) reinvent
b) famous
c) iconic | 8. a) democratize
b) make accessible
c) legacy |

Critical Thinking & Discussion

Balanced Viewpoints

Position A: Career reinvention later in life is risky and unrealistic.

Position B: Later-life reinvention brings clarity, experience, and confidence.

Prepare arguments for one position, then debate, use expression guide on page 6.

Reframing Limitations :

Identify how the text reframes :

- Age
- Simplicity
- "Poor" materials

Professional Application

For office managers and showroom teams:

- How can storytelling increase the perceived value of a product?
- How can you present materials (even simple or affordable ones) as intentional design choices?
- What lessons from Putman's "radical simplicity" could influence how you curate a showroom display?

Writing

Write a short LinkedIn-style reflection (150–200 words):

"My Next Professional Reinvention"

Include:

- One limitation
- One opportunity
- One concrete action

Useful Expressions and Transitions for Debating

Giving an Opinion

- In my opinion...
- I believe that...
- From my point of view...
- I think that...
- Personally, I feel that...

Adding / Responding to a Point

- I'd like to add something.
- Can I add something here?
- That's a good point.
- Another thing to consider is...
- Building on what you said...

Asking for Clarification

- What do you mean by...?
- Could you explain that again?
- Do you mean that...?
- I'm not sure I understand.

Summarizing & Concluding

- To sum up...
- In conclusion...
- So what you're saying is...
- Let me summarize my idea...
- Finally, I'd like to say...

Agreeing & Partly Agreeing

- I agree with you.
- I agree to some extent, but...
- I see your point.
- That's true, but...
- You're right about that.
- I feel the same way.
- I understand what you mean.

Disagreeing Politely

- I'm not sure I agree.
- I'm afraid I disagree.
- I see your point, but I think...
- I don't really agree with that.
- With all due respect, I think...
- That may be true, but...

Persuading

- Try to see it this way...
- Imagine if...
- Wouldn't you agree that...?
- Think about the fact that...

The Language of Space: Expression Guide

Talking About Design Concepts

Style & Identity

- aesthetic
- concept
- design language
- visual identity
- cohesive
- minimalist / maximalist
- contemporary / timeless
- understated / bold
- iconic

Describing Impact

- striking
- refined
- elegant
- functional
- inviting
- harmonious
- balanced
- sophisticated
- immersive

Useful Expressions

- “The concept behind this collection is...”
- “This piece creates a sense of...”
- “The design language is inspired by...”
- “The space feels cohesive because...”
- “It’s understated but highly impactful.”

Materials & Finishes

Material Types

- solid wood
- veneer
- marble
- natural stone
- brushed metal
- polished brass
- concrete
- glass
- ceramic
- textile / upholstery

Surface & Texture

- matte / glossy
- textured / smooth
- raw / refined
- durable
- sustainable
- tactile

Useful Expressions

- “The material palette combines rich and raw elements.”
- “This finish adds warmth to the space.”
- “It’s highly durable and suitable for commercial use.”
- “The tactile quality makes it feel inviting.”