



a LOVE SONG to less

Guillaume Alan designs a Paris that speaks
to the minimalist poetry of space

Words by SHALAKA PARADKAR

A view of the living room area featuring thin-legged Archibald armchairs by Jean-Marie Massaud; a Willy armchair by Guglielmo Ulrich; a gold coffee table by Armand Lonckers; a silver floor lamp by Alessandro Mendini; the Silhouette rug by Jaime Hayon. At the back are a pair of black sculptures by Tony Gregg and Juliet by Francois Stahly and a Robert Wilson painting (inspired by a portrait painted by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres).

The FEATURES



A table by Georges Mohasseb with vintage chairs. Above is a lighting fixture by Noé Duchaufour-Laurance. The artwork in the background is by Peter Zimmermann.

Space and serenity are the ultimate luxuries in today's chaotic times. When it comes to creating a home that feels like a sanctuary, less can actually feel like so much more – as seen in this Parisian home designed by the architect and interior designer Guillaume Alan.

The setting for the apartment is as perfect as it can be for the French capital. Located in a magnificent 19th-century Haussmannian building, the apartment is close to the Trocadéro, with views of the Seine and the Eiffel Tower. The homeowners are keen travellers who wanted a place that felt tranquil and welcoming after their journeying, a home where they could unwind as well as entertain, in spaces that felt familiar yet unexpected.

Minimalism can often descend into feeling clinical or cold; a quality attributed to its monochromatic nature. But the triumph of Alan's designing here is such that the severely edited colour palette does the exact opposite. With the colour leached out of the space, it lets the light and architecture speak loudly, in soft tones. The result is warm and romantic, suffused with that quintessentially French *je ne sais quoi*.

For this apartment, the interior designer used a bespoke chalky grey ('craie') and applied it to different textures and materials to create a soft, romantic ambience. "Although this gorgeous apartment isn't shy of space, by using the same tone across the apartment and the furniture pieces, we not only created the illusion of more space, but it also allowed for more depth, texture and warmth to be added to each room – without the need to commit to a colour," Alan says.

Born and raised in the world of architecture and design – his father was an architect, mother an interior designer and grandmother an antique dealer – gravitating to his career was natural for

Alan. He launched his own studio when he was 22, in Saint-Germain-des-Prés in Paris, and opened another studio in Mayfair, London in 2011, led by his design partner Emilie Le Corre.

"We share this same vision, which is an extraordinary rarity. It's all about restraint in architecture and elements, but opulence in spirit," Alan elaborates. Their approach is built on integrity and staying well clear of trends; the spaces they create are thus timeless. "Luxury for us is all around calm and serenity."

Among Alan's earliest design memories are the ordered magnificence of the Louvre's square courtyard, the Cour Carrée, and the tranquil simplicity of Mies van der Rohe's Barcelona Pavilion in Spain. That love of classical purity shines through in his work today, be it architecture, interior design or his furniture design.

Like his other projects, in the Parisian apartment as well, the architecture and interior design feels seamless. Alan puts that down to his approach: "We understand the place as a whole; architecture, interior and furniture design are only one for me. When I start a project, I try to create a picture in my mind in which these three elements are totally connected. It's only later that we get down to detailing each of them. Everything has been thought, drawn by the same hand, in line with the finest tradition of French design and décorateurs ensembliers."

The result is flawless and harmonious, a love letter to the beauty of leaving things out rather than adding them in for the sake of it. "The architecture, the light, the floor, the materials used, the colour palette and all the furniture pieces are all perfectly linked."

Alan cites Mies van der Rohe, Tadao Ando, Le Corbusier and Kengo Kuma as designers who have had the most influence on him. Like his Modernist idols, Alan believes in the power of staying true to materials and thoughtful detailing. "I would say that in almost 20 years of practise, my approach has grown and is more mature now," he expands. "When we take on a project and before



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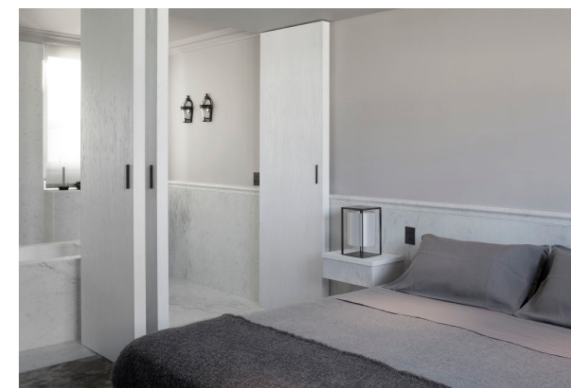
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Successful design is made possible by clients who take the leap of faith and share the designer's vision. Alan attributes his success to building precious relationships with clients, while working for their homes, and imagining their way of life. "In the Parisian apartment, we had a very lovely relationship with the homeowners from the start of the project until its completion. It has been a relationship based on trust; they've always been very supportive, embracing our elaborate plans. The idea of being able to create and to open the doors of imagination was extraordinary." ■ xx.com

the works start, we already have a clear vision of what we want to achieve and what the result will be at the end. It's also about always working around how to create emotions. We try to engender vibrant emotions, to awaken the mind with sobriety. My philosophy is in creating a feeling of appeasement, through beauty and purity."

Alan's creative approach is determined by the space. To understand it in all its glory, he is known to gut existing surfaces to get down to the bare bones of the structure. "We break down ceilings, walls and floor when they don't represent something, or obviously when they don't have any value for the project. After the mise à nue, the 'laying bare', we can see and feel all the potential."

In the Parisian apartment, the gutting of the interior resulted in the discovery of an incredible and unusually high ceiling in the living room. "This allowed us to create beautiful arches, very pure and minimal, in contrast with the entrance hall, where we drew and created a succession of stone vaults." The vaults were inspired by the orangery of the Château de Versailles, with recessed mirrors creating a multiplication of the entrance and its arches. It is the perfect meeting ground of French classicism and modern minimalism.

The leitmotif of Alan's work is the passion for craftsmanship and detail. Obsessed with precision, every element and texture is celebrated, without descending into ostent. His schemes are tactile and luxurious — using fine woods, such as oak or ash, in brushed finishes, natural marble, brass, natural linen, soft leather, wool, silk and bronze — and always focused on a bespoke palette. The studio is currently working on several private projects in France, UK and abroad, including private homes, a hotel in the south of France and a restaurant in Paris.

Words by Rebecca Anne Proctor. Photography by Francis Amiard

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ISSN 2220-3257
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ISSUE 39 ON 25.10.17
3.9