

EDIT

*Inspirational interiors, beautiful gardens,
fascinating people, compelling stories*

HOUSES

From page 200: Robert Kime's London flat; a pared-back Paris apartment; a Tuscan convent transformed; an architect's personal project; and a Chelsea mansion flat

GARDENS

From page 238: Tom Stuart-Smith's scheme for a Berkshire garden has filled it with colour and texture; and part one of Clare Foster's new series about trees



ELEVATED ELEGANCE

A top-floor apartment in Paris has been stripped of all extraneous elements by Guillaume Alan to create a pure, pared-back interior in the leafy 16th arrondissement

TEXT IAN PHILLIPS | PHOTOGRAPHS MATTHEW DONALDSON

SITTING ROOM
Based on an elegant Georgian design, the 'Hyde Hanging Lantern' by Jamb introduces a more traditional element to the living space, where armchairs, a coffee table and a sofa from Guillaume's 'Satin' collection enhance the contemporary feel





Guillaume has a minimalist, zen-like aesthetic: 'I like a neutral chic, strong lines and fine materials'

OPPOSITE (clockwise from top left) Furniture from Guillaume's 'Satin' range suits the restrained look of the sitting room. His Ming-influenced 'Tao' chair and a marble dado bring a classical elegance to the kitchen and main bedroom. Black taps create a dramatic contrast with the pale marble surfaces in the bathroom and kitchen

French interior designer Guillaume Alan has a very uncompromising approach to his profession. When he takes on a project, he likes to be given *carte blanche*. 'It's important for me to have a client who understands what I am creating for them,' he explains. 'If I have an idea, I want everyone to get behind it.'

Such integrity and determination have no doubt contributed to Guillaume's success. He opened his first design studio on Paris's Rue de Bourgogne in 2002 at the age of 24, and added a London outpost in 2011, run by his associate Emilie Le Corre, which recently moved from Mayfair to a location near Connaught Square, W2. His 'Stella' chair has proved a bestseller (Philippe Starck chose it for the original Cristal Room restaurant at Maison Baccarat museum in Paris) and interior-design commissions have ranged from the music salon at the Hôtel de Matignon, the French prime minister's official residence, to a palace in the Middle East.

The owners of this airy apartment in Paris's 16th arrondissement (she is a lawyer, he is a financial director) originally discovered Guillaume when they bought one of his 'Valmont' sofas and a set of chairs over a decade ago. 'I love his world,' enthuses the wife. 'It's gentle and fluid.' Throughout his career, Guillaume has stayed true to a minimalist, zen-like aesthetic – a reaction, he says, to his childhood homes, which were always packed with furniture and objects. 'I like a neutral chic, strong lines and fine materials,' he explains. Asia has proved particularly inspirational. His 'Tao' chair is a pared-down version of Chinese Ming-dynasty models and he also loves the purity, calm and restraint of Japanese interiors.

Located on the top floor of a typical Haussmann-style building, this 140-square-metre space has both a terrace and a view of the Eiffel Tower, neither of which were prerequisites for the current owners. 'We were pleasantly surprised to find it was within our budget,' admits the wife. Guillaume and Emilie almost completely gutted the place: they removed a crooked drop ceiling in the sitting room to gain extra height; they created graceful

arched walls; they realigned structural columns; and they opened up a series of doorways along one side of the flat to create strong perspectives. A bedroom was transformed into a beautifully balanced kitchen with a walk-in wine cellar in an alcove that formerly housed a four-poster bed – the ideal space for the owners' collection, including Saint-Julien wines from the Bordeaux region.

One of the few elements Guillaume and Emilie opted to keep was the original mosaic flooring in the entrance hall, where they added stone walls during the renovation inspired by the Orangerie at Versailles. The starting point for the rest of the decoration was a fifteenth-century stone bust Guillaume discovered in London, at Jamb on Pimlico Road, SW1. He was taken with its colour and texture. 'It looks almost lifelike, as if it could move,' he enthuses. The gentle, light beige palette was drawn both from this and the coat of Emilie's Alaskan malamute dog, with the same tones used throughout but with different materials – such as leather, stone and ash wood – in order to give a rhythm to each of the rooms. 'What I love about ash is the expressive, sinuous nature of its grain,' he says.

Although the majority of the furnishings are resolutely contemporary, Guillaume did mix in a few more traditional elements, such as the ceiling lantern by Jamb, based on a Georgian design but made bespoke to his specifications, in the sitting room. The chimneypiece here has a slightly medieval air (its brackets are a nod to those on Parisian balconies) and the parquet flooring was laid *aslant*, as was often the case in the fifteenth century. ('It would have felt too rigid if it had been straight,' he asserts), while the marble dados in the kitchen and main bedroom are classical in feel. Guillaume was particularly happy when the clients agreed that the latter could also serve as the bedhead. 'It would have been horrible for me to have had to install one in fabric,' he confides.

Such is the overall sense of serenity that you feel almost as though floating on a cloud. For Guillaume and Emilie, this kind of ethereal effect is more desirable than a visually striking interior. 'My goal is not to be spectacular,' he insists. 'I want my work to stand the test of time. For this, my aim is simple – to create something exceptional' □

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THE AUTUMN EDIT

WE REVEAL WHAT'S NEW, WHO'S WHO
AND THIS SEASON'S NEW FABRIC COLLECTIONS