

The Telegraph

LUXURY

French interior designer Guillaume Alan tore his London town house apart to create a temple to modern minimalism.





Left Guillaume Alan with his design partner, Emilie Le Corre

WHEN GUILLAUME ALAN wakes up in his Mayfair town house, he knows immediately which city he is in by the light. 'I have a home in Paris too, but in London the light is exceptional,' the interior designer says. 'It is why this city attracted so many great painters – you don't find this quality of light anywhere else.' Unusually, he has configured his bedroom so that the bed faces inwards, rather than towards the tall sash windows, because 'I like to be woken by the light creeping over softly from behind the bed.'

This love of light is key to Alan's meticulous and refined design ethos. His home is almost monastic in its pared-down simplicity and lack of ornamentation. When he bought it just over a year ago, he ripped out every floor and surface, taking it back to a raw canvas on which he could express his love of natural materials and rich textures. Aided by his design partner, Emilie Le Corre, he has transformed the handsome four-storey terraced house into both studio and home, perfectly balancing the heritage features with bold, contemporary lines.

The main building work has been centred on digging out the lower ground floor to create a spacious kitchen and home spa, in which cleverly positioned light wells allow daylight to flood down from above. On the ground floor is the studio, with the drawing

BASIC INSTINCTS

French interior designer Guillaume Alan tore his London town house apart to create a temple to modern minimalism. By Helen Chislett. Photographs by Matthew Donaldson

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Right The base of the Corian dining table has a cut-out of the Japanese character for luck. **Opposite, clockwise from top** Antique wall lights feature in the drawing room, where the walls are painted a shade of Alan's own creation; the town house is surrounded by trees, with Hyde Park beyond; furniture is also made to Alan's specifications, including the brushed-oak coffee table in a shade that he describes as 'beluga' – the caviar hue between brown and black.



room and dining room on the first floor. Above is the master suite, and above that, the guest suite. Alan shares the living space with his Alaskan malamute, Chepie, and there is plenty of room for the parties that he likes to throw for friends.

He moved to London seven years ago. Today, he runs a studio of three in

Paris and four in London, taking on projects in locations as diverse as the Oxfordshire countryside, the Middle East, the Far East and America, as well as France and London.

Alan believes that design success is down to 'superb execution of ideas' – a key consideration with a minimalist aesthetic such as his – but has avoided

a stark look here by choosing materials that impart character, such as reclaimed-oak floors and hand-applied Venetian-plaster finishes. 'I like to have perfection and imperfection at the same time,' he says. 'I create a picture in my head, and the feeling of what I want.'

He is obsessive about following his vision, creating his own light-grey paint for the walls and commissioning mills in Scotland to weave his collection of wool and cashmere upholstery fabrics. Furniture is timeless and elegant – there are Ming-dynasty-inspired chairs and a Corian dining table with the Japanese character for luck carved into the base. Colours are muted, with a very French blend of whites, cool greys and lilacs. Pieces of coral have become something of a signature for Alan. And although he loves art, most of his own works are bare. 'Sometimes I just want the purity of the space. This makes me feel well and happy – it takes away the frenzy of the city.'

He founded his interior-design business over 20 years ago, at the age of 22, flying solo. His father was an architect, his mother an interior designer, and his

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From near right A bespoke ash bedhead in the master bedroom was made to Alan's specifications, including lighting and storage; a single candle stands on the mantelpiece in the drawing room; wood panelling in the dining room

grandmother an antique dealer, so the creative streak is part of his DNA. 'If you work for someone else, your own style can become diluted,' he says. 'I worked hard to make my own style strong enough to stand for something.'

With such an international clientele, a sense of place is also important to Alan; he believes the history and culture of a city should be reflected in a home there. 'I want to tell stories as

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someone walks around their home. It is all about discovery – the big picture and the small details all at once.' Brexit aside, he has no plans to move for the foreseeable future. 'I love it here, walking in Hyde Park or St James's, or visiting the V&A or the Royal Academy,' he says. 'I love the trees outside my windows and the way the landscape changes so much through the seasons.'
guillaume-alan.com



HOW TO DO MINIMALISM IN 2018

- 1** Don't include too many different furniture styles – repetition is a strength, not a weakness.
- 2** Keep window treatments simple and tailored.
- 3** Choose a palette of mainly classical materials, such as marble, bronze and plaster.
- 4** Never lose sight of the vision you are trying to achieve – each object you introduce must be part of the picture as a whole.
- 5** Be obsessive about detail – it is what makes the difference between a standard interior and an outstanding one.

