

# An urban oasis



**W**alking into Guillaume Alan's new Mayfair store is an instantly calming experience. The French interior designer has a knack for creating spaces that are serene and peaceful – minimalist, without being stark or cold. The difference is in the detail. On display is Alan's Caprice sofa, which on first glance is all clean, modern lines. But the main body is made of wool, like a Savile Row suit, and the plush seat cushions are silk with a woollen pattern on top inspired by 18th century Venetian design. It's deep, too – not just designed to look good, but to be curled up on and engulfed in, too.

Alan likes to surprise with his choice of materials: his Tamon dining table is made of Corian, a material more often used for kitchen and bathroom surfaces for its robustness. Yet here, a Chinese symbol has been laser-carved into the legs, making it look more like a sculpture. The new Satin collection, in a soothing craie (chalk) colour, has chairs that are an unusual combination of textile and leather, and a beautiful long, low white coffee table in Ash (above) that has been treated in an unusual way so that every curve and twist of the woodgrain stands out.

These are functional pieces that are beautiful and whimsical, in a subtle way that couldn't be more different from a loud feature wall or attention-grabbing chandelier. "When you walk into one of my rooms, there isn't one specific thing that you'll notice that stands out – it's more about creating an atmosphere," says Alan, "but everything's in the detail. I am a perfectionist, and I have everything handmade perfectly."

The 34-year-old's fans in his native country – among them top businessmen, politicians and actors – love him because he knows how to soothe away the strains of their high-flying lifestyles. "The world's a very stressful and sometimes aggressive place," he says, "and my clients love to come back home and feel peaceful."

He's also proved a particular hit with the world of fashion, with his furniture appearing in shoots for the likes of Dior, Chanel, Balenciaga, Tom Ford and Yves Saint Laurent. "Perhaps it's because I use materials like cashmere and fur, which they love," he suggests. Or perhaps it's that he says he approaches designing a chair in the same way a fashion designer might approach designing a dress. No opportunity

**GUILLAUME ALAN IS BELOVED OF THE FRENCH ELITE FOR CREATING TRANQUIL SPACES THAT COUNTERBALANCE THEIR STRESSFUL LIFESTYLES. NOW HE'S SET TO WORK THE SAME MAGIC FROM HIS NEW MAYFAIR STORE AND DESIGN STUDIO**



for creativity is lost – on his furniture, every seam is different, and everything has an unexpectedly beautiful lining.

Alan was immersed in the world of design from childhood – both his parents were architects and his grandmother was a well-known antique dealer in Paris. Yet he studied business, not design. "It was because people told me business was a proper profession, and being an artist wasn't," he explains. "But in the end I just did what I wanted."

He worked in a couple of high-profile design studios before launching his own brand at just 24, opening a store in the Saint Germain area of Paris. His clients pushed him to set up a design studio as well, so he could provide a complete interior design service. He has since decorated many homes in France and abroad, and is now shipping to Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong, the US and Brazil, amongst others.

Mayfair looks set to be the first in a series of openings that will turn this young Frenchman into a global brand.

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