

MODERN

MAGAZINE

DESIGN
DECORATIVE ARTS
ARCHITECTURE

FALL 2013 modernmag.com



Fabrice Ausset is drawn to the work of Ettore Sottsass, especially his towering totems titled *Odalisco* and *Burmo*, prominently placed in the living room of Ausset's Paris apartment.



FRENCH EVOLUTION

By Brook S. Mason

PHOTOGRAPHY by Véronique Mati

THE OVERREACHING AESTHETIC OF PARIS ARCHITECT AND INTERIOR DESIGNER FABRICE AUSSET is his preference for clean lines, light-filled settings, an occasional pop sensibility, and the juxtaposition of different periods and materials. He frequently places iconic examples by Ettore Sottsass and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe beside eighteenth-century furnishings and specially commissioned works. The design-savvy Ausset has completed a string of commercial and residential projects, including Paris luxury hotels, an eighteenth-century château restoration, and pop-up stores for Céline in Tokyo.

Further underscoring his talents, Ausset just completed his first design line, Silverwing—a

series of streamlined limited edition stainless steel chairs, banquettes, and a table—with the Left Bank Galerie Pouenat, which focuses on metalwork by French architects and designers.

So it was perfectly natural for Ausset to turn to his tried-and-true aesthetic in transforming a typical postwar three-bedroom apartment in the stylish sixteenth arrondissement into a home for his family where he could also showcase his growing collection of contemporary art and design. Born in the south of France, Ausset acquired his architecture degree from the *École des Beaux-Arts* in Nîmes. Promptly after graduating, he headed to Paris, where he set up his own firm, Zovox Studio. His first commission was a travel agency.

One wall of the living room is dominated by a Franck Rezzak mural with surreal figures in an eerie cave-like setting. Directly against the fresco (at the left) is a Tom Dixon standing lamp. The velvet-upholstered sofa and chairs are replicas Ausset had made of those in Coco Chanel's famed apartment. On the coffee table are sinuous bronze vases by Zaha Hadid.





André Dubreuil's mega-scaled 1993 bronze desk, a riff on the traditional eighteenth-century bureau plat, is complemented by a period French chair. On the desk is an Ettore Sottsass marble and copper vase. The rug is of Ausset's own design.

On the wall between the living and dining rooms is a table by Carlo Mollino, and, above it, sculptural lighting by Stéphane Ducatteau. Among the objects on the table are Gae Aulenti's Giova table lamp and flower vase for Fontana Arte and an intricate sculpture by Régis Mayot.



The apartment was a series of routine "white box" rooms typical of many postwar high rise buildings. "Overwhelmingly, apartments from the postwar era are pedestrian and totally lacking in design sophistication," Ausset says. "For my own home, I wanted to create a light-filled space in which to feature our extensive collection of contemporary art and design." To that end, he gutted the apartment and reconfigured the space by moving the kitchen and opening up the living and dining rooms to create a more flowing layout. "Too often, spaces are cramped, don't take advantage of natural light and have poor circulation patterns," he observes. Then, he infused the living and dining rooms with light by turning to a palette of dazzling white, ecru, and beige in counterpoint to the dark zebrawood flooring.

For inspiration, Ausset reached back to his 2009 renovation of the Hôtel Fontaines du Luxembourg in Paris. "In that design, I turned

to the creative genius of the *grande dame* of dealers and interior designers, the late Madeleine Castaigne, who so brilliantly mixed different materials and periods," he says.

For the living room, he began by commissioning a wall-sized fresco of a surrealistic cave-like setting by the French artist Franck Rezzak, a Paris École des Beaux-Arts graduate. "The fresco continues to be mystifying," Ausset says of the artwork, which is executed in pale pink, soft purple, lime green, and sharp red. He anchored the room with a deep blue and white rug of his own design.

Ausset juxtaposed these elements with a bronze desk by designer André Dubreuil, some of whose witty reinterpretations of period French furnishings are in such museums as London's Victoria and Albert. "The desk is a riff on a *bureau plat* of the dix-huitième siècle with lavish marquetry-like designs," Ausset says. Though retaining the basic shape of the

The dining room is remarkably chaste in feel. Here, Ausset chose Eero Saarinen's Tulip table and chairs. Complementing those ubiquitous design icons is lighting by Tom Dixon, Achille Castiglioni, and George Nelson.



traditional *bureau plat*, in Dubreuil's hands the proportions are mega-scaled. "It's highly detailed yet strong and elegant," Ausset observes, adding, "I told André I had been waiting for years to acquire that desk." On it Ausset has placed a marble and copper vase by Sottsass. "I like the contrast of the geometrically shaped vase with the curves of the desk and the colors of the fresco," he says. On the glass coffee table are vases in bronze by Zaha Hadid.

Ausset added a tobacco brown velvet sofa and burnt yellow velvet chairs, which he copied from those in the apartment of the

late fashion designer Coco Chanel. "I've always wanted them for my own home," he says. Elsewhere in the room are Sottsass's ceramic totems titled *Odalisca* and *Burma*. "I'm drawn to postwar Italian design by that Memphis founder," Ausset says. (He also has a penchant for George Nelson furnishings, which can be found in other rooms.)

Beside the opening into the dining room, Ausset placed a Carlo Mollino wood and glass table and sculptural wall lighting by Stéphane Ducatteau. On the table are a Gae Aulenti lamp and vase and a sculpture by Régis Mayot.



In Ausset's son's bedroom, Danish chairs from the 1960s abut a stainless steel Ikea desk. Above hangs a Franck Rezzak work on paper.

Above: In this bedroom is a George Nelson desk, above which hang drawings by Naomi Bishop. Centered on the orange wall is Mark Brazier-Jones's Pupitre console. On it are a Gaetano Pesce vase and a Martine Bedin lamp.



For the dining room, Ausset chose an Eero Saarinen Tulip table and chairs, complemented by lighting by Tom Dixon, Achille Castiglioni, and George Nelson. As to the bedrooms, Ausset opted for bright colors on the walls; for his own bedroom he designed patterned rugs akin to those by the late David Hicks. Of his artwork, he says, "My taste in contemporary art is totally eclectic. While I'm drawn to Franck Rezzak, I also like totally abstract work."

Where does Ausset's sense of design spring from? "I grew up with eighteenth-century furniture and my mother is a sculptor. Early on, I was attuned to form and shape and the importance of materials," he says. Clearly, he has been guided by that sensitivity throughout his career. "Of my home, now it's like a light box filled with icons of twentieth- and twenty-first-century design and art," he says. ■