

SIMPLY CHIC

'Simplicity' is the keyword for this 19th-century Paris apartment, whose thoughtful, pared-back design allows its owners plenty of room to breathe.



By Marzia Nicolini Photographed by Helenio Barbetta/Living Inside

In the living room, a 1980s sofa purchased on eBay sits in front of a large vintage mirror and faces an 'Alanda' coffee table by Paolo Piva for B&B Italia. In the foreground is a pair of vintage leather gym mats repurposed as a divan. OPPOSITE PAGE: Personal treasures clustered throughout the apartment add an atmospheric touch. Details, last pages.



The setting is a very classic one: a 90-square-metre Haussmanian apartment in the heart of Paris. We are in the Haut Marais, one of the most vibrant neighbourhoods in the city. The 19th-century architecture is original and majestic, with features including casement windows, ornate cornicing, lofty ceilings and a parquet floor.

The owners, interior designers Charlotte de Tonnac and Hugo Sauzay, were drawn to the building's history, grandeur and sense of scale, but they were keen to add their own unconventional twist to the space — which also serves as the headquarters for their design practice, Festen. They don't eat at the dining table, for instance; they like the coffee table better. They designed a coat rack made of metal pipes. And their bedhead is a repurposed 1950s leather gym mat. "We found these three mats in a flea market in the south of France," Sauzay recalls. "They had been recovered from a school. We thought it would be interesting to change their use, so we made the headboard — it's very warm and soft — and because we like to sit close to the floor, we stacked two and made the perfect couch."

The couple, who met as students at the Academy of Decorative Arts in Paris, are more than happy to combine their home with their workshop. "We literally spend all our days here," Sauzay says. "It is so comfortable; we feel lucky to live in this place. It is very central, and it's in such a dynamic neighbourhood with lots of art galleries, small fashion and design shops, and concept stores. The Pompidou Centre is just a five-minute walk; you can reach the Seine River in about 10 minutes. There are a couple of local markets and a small Asian area right behind our street. All we need is right here."»

Interior design duo Hugo Sauzay and Charlotte de Tonnac in the living room of their Paris apartment. A Sori Yanagi 'Butterfly' stool sits alongside a custom-made steel bookshelf. The low-slung furniture emphasises the height of the ornate ceiling. Suspended in the corner is a 'Tube' chandelier by lighting designer Michael Anastassiades.



Original features include the ornate fireplace and decorative cornicing. In the dressing area, also seen on the opposite page, a taxidermied peacock found in a flea market is perched atop a pair of wire 'Diamond' chairs by Harry Bertola. The pendant Con Tradition light is by Sara Bernardi; the owners designed the metal coat rack. The paintings are by French urban artist Jean Faucheur.





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« Living here keeps life simple, and if the duo’s interior style has a single keyword, it’s ‘simplicity’. “The original aspect of the apartment was already pretty important, with stucco and the large fireplace, so the goal was to maintain a low profile,” Sauzay explains. “We like to respect the history of the place: everything here is played on the very Parisian spirit of this property, contrasting with an eclectic design mix. We think this combination is perfect.” The result is a solid, low-key space, where the co-existence of contemporary and vintage pieces provides a timeless feel. Pieces by 20th-century icons, such as the 1950s Harry Bertoia side chairs and the Sori Yanagi ‘Butterfly’ stool, sit effortlessly with a well-worn Eames lounge chair and ottoman from The Conran Shop, for instance, and a ‘Tube’ chandelier by UK designer Michael Anastassiades, one of the most sophisticated light designers of his generation.

The role of each piece is casually calculated. “There isn’t an excess of furniture,” Sauzay says. “We need visual space for our minds. Emptiness should never be missing in our home.”

The true master of the house can always be found testing the comfort of each chair, table, sofa or gym mat. “We have a shameless and intrusive cat,” Sauzay says with a laugh, “who is something of a legend with our customers — especially when he jumps on their knees and begins to play with layouts in the middle of a meeting.”

Sauzay and de Tonnac bring that same sense of warmth, personality and ease to their interiors work, with upcoming projects including their first hotel in Paris. The design duo have created a winning formula that reflects their personal taste — mixing old with new, sophisticated with bohemian, modern with retro.

As de Tonnac says, “We try to create atmospheric, sensitive areas and we hope they will endure in time.” *VL*
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Another view of the living room (top): the couple’s office features a ‘Meridiana’ chair by Christophe Pillet for Driade. OPPOSITE PAGE: The bedhead is made from a vintage leather gym mat; the ‘Tolomeo Micro Terra’ lamp is by Michele de Lucchi and Giancarlo Piretti for Artemide. Details, last pages.

