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HIGH STYLE IN LONDON
A CARIBBEAN PARADISE
INSIDER'S GUIDE TO ANTWERP

A 1940s plaster urn graces the entrance hall of a London residence renovated by Swanepoel Management and Hubert Zandberg Interiors for Shirin Elghanayan and her family; Archie, the homeowners' Cavalier King Charles spaniel, rests on the floor. **Opposite:** Elghanayan in her dressing room, which is furnished with a mirrored vanity and a Collection Pierre chair from David Sutherland; the curtains are of a Sahco fabric, and the carpet is by the Rug Company. For details see Sources.



URBANE RENEWAL

A stately London townhouse gets an elegant makeover with bespoke interiors marked by a subtle palette and shimmering surfaces

When Shirin Elghanayan says that she now has her dream house, she does so in a way that leaves no doubts—though it took nearly 20 years for the dream to come true. She and her husband had been in their central London residence for more than a decade, always wanting to revamp it, but only when their children were teenagers did it become clear that the gracious Georgian townhouse no longer suited the way the family lived. It had to change with them.

Learning of the Elghanayans' urge to renovate, a friend enthusiastically recommended interior designer Hubert Zandberg, and he grasped immediately what the couple wanted. To achieve what amounted to a complete overhaul, Zandberg joined forces with architectural designer Jan Swanepoel, a longtime collaborator. Elghanayan describes the two men, both from South Africa and

based in London, as "a phenomenal team." Even though the Elghanayans are involved in real estate and "therefore understand the whole process—the drawings, the work, the budgets," as Swanepoel notes, it took a year of discussion and decision-making before construction could begin. And it was another two years before the project was finished.

Rebuilt in the 1920s, the townhouse endured a varied history—serving for a time as an embassy—and one of the few interior architectural features to survive intact was its stone staircase. While the building's façade is protected from alteration, the Elghanayans were free to make extensive changes within. Ultimately the staircase, an elevator, and a study that had been lined in Jacobean-style paneling by a previous owner were all they

TEXT BY TRISTRAM HOLLAND PHOTOGRAPHY BY SIMON UPTON PRODUCED BY MICHAEL REYNOLDS



Clockwise from top left: Framed Islamic manuscripts join an Hervé Van der Straeten scone above a Jansen chair in the reception room. Artworks by Victor Vasarely and mirrors by Graham Harrison Framing overlook the room's sofas, which were custom made by Hubert Zandberg in a J. Robert Scott silk mohair; Zandberg also designed the fire screen, while the rug is by Stephanie Odegard Collection. The stairwell features antiqued-mirror panels and a balustrade modified to a 1940s style.

kept. The roughly 7,100-square-foot residence was reconfigured into distinct zones, with the street level dedicated to the entertaining spaces, the floors above containing the bedrooms, and the partially subterranean basement accommodating a casual family room and bar, a guest room, and a small gym.

On the ground floor and bedroom levels, Swanepoel devised an elegant yet disciplined shell that combines generous baseboards and orderly architraves with simple Georgian-style cornices (which cleverly conceal air-conditioning diffusers). To realize more modern and flexible spaces, Swanepoel increased the height and width of some key doorways. Now when the doors

between the kitchen and the reception room are thrown open, for example, the ambience of the latter changes dramatically—its formality is sliced, and a sense of expansiveness is created. Enhancing the effect is the continuity of the pale walls and dark floors, the ebonized oak planks laid in the reception room blending seamlessly with the kitchen's slate pavers.

The kitchen is “very much the heart of the house,” Elghanayan says. “Cooking is a passion of mine, and we eat at home at least a few times a week.” With its opulent Calacatta-marble surfaces and meticulously crafted cabinetry, the kitchen is as striking as it is welcoming. The same could be said of the dining room, formerly



the study, whose richly carved paneling was restored, painted gray, and accented with sleek, sculptural sconces by Hervé Van der Straeten and artworks by Matisse and Mustafa Hulusi. Although a fraction of the size of the Elghanayans' previous dining room, it has an intimacy that suits the couple: They like to entertain informally, typically hosting no more than a dozen friends.

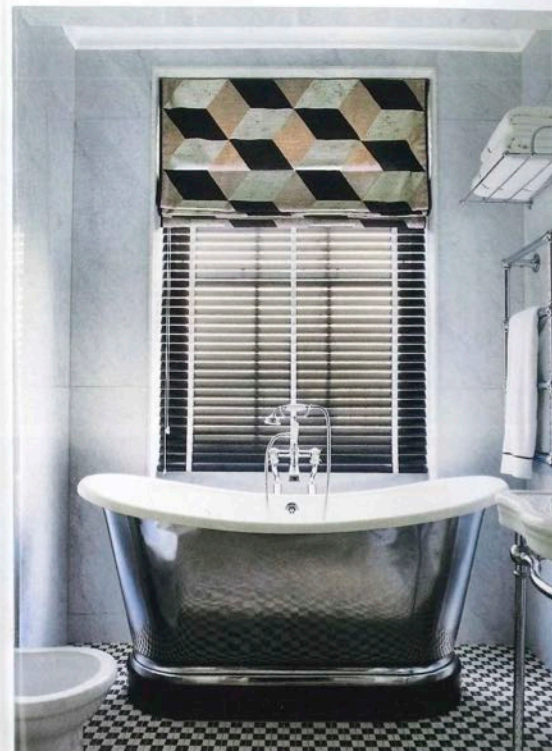
Elghanayan worked closely with Zandberg on the decor throughout the residence, and the two settled broadly on a 1940s French aesthetic, partly because "it amalgamates so easily with other styles," says the designer. For the reception room, Zandberg

conceived a pair of gently curving plush sofas, two broad, tufted ottomans, and a boldly patterned glass fire screen, grouping them with '40s French armchairs, Gio Ponti-style lacquer consoles, and elegant gesso-and-silver-leaf mirrors. With its rich variety of furnishings, the space emanates a sense of sumptuous ease, reinforced by the soothing, pared-down palette and graceful architectural framework.

Many of the elements employed on the ground floor—an abundance of antiqued mirror, glossy surfaces, subdued colors, intriguing textures, and bespoke furniture—can also be found upstairs. →

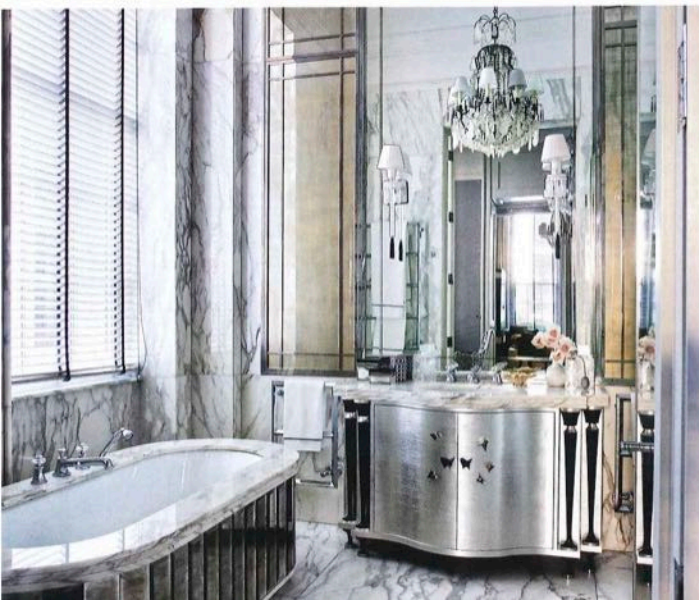


Clockwise from above: Jacobean-style paneling lines the dining room, which is anchored by a bespoke rosewood table by Jonathan Baring and chairs covered in a Lelièvre fabric; the sconce is by Hervé Van der Straeten, the tabletop sculpture is a 1970s piece by Jean Camuset, the drawing over the fireplace is by Matisse, and the abstract painting is by Mustafa Hulusi. Cox London light fixtures hang in the kitchen and the breakfast area. The range is by Wolf.



Clockwise from above: A bath features a polished-iron tub by the Water Monopoly; the tub fittings and towel racks are by Lefroy Brooks, and the towels are by Ralph Lauren Home, and the Roman shade is made of a Pierre Frey fabric. Shirin's dressing room includes a Jansen sofa; the lipstick and nail-polish sculptures are by Kosta Boda. In a guest room painted in a Farrow & Ball blue, flea-market watercolors and an Eiffel Tower lamp are grouped with a custom-made leather-top table. *Opposite, from top:* Hubert Zandberg designed the den's sofa, upholstered in a de Le Cuona fabric, and the button-tufted ottoman. The blue guest room is animated by a vintage zinc star; the bed is dressed in a brown Ralph Lauren Home wool coverlet.





Hubert Zandberg designed the master suite's four-poster; the sofa is by Jansen, and the silver-leafed-bronze table lamps are by Hervé Van der Straeten from Alexandre Biaggi.

Left, from top: The master suite's study area is outfitted with a Baker mirror and a Jansen armchair covered in a Zoffany flame-stitch pattern; the curtains are of a Sahco satin. Accented with Baccarat crystal sconces by Arik Levy, Shirin's bath boasts a custom-made mirrored tub surround and a silver-painted vanity with butterfly pulls from E. R. Butler.

The master suite, once the building's grand salon, is now an inviting retreat. Zandberg installed a magnificent laser-cut metal screen to delineate a soigné study space, furnished with silver-tone bookcases and a Louis XV-style desk, from the rest of the bedroom, which is anchored by a lavishly curtained four-poster. At the foot of the bed, he created a sitting area highlighted by a Jansen sofa and matching inlaid-Macassar-ebony cabinets, one of which conceals a television.

Little wonder the bedroom is the place Elghanayan loves most. She calls it "my sanctuary." His-and-her dressing rooms and baths complete the suite. Her bath in particular is unabashedly, gloriously glitzy—outfitted with crystal light fixtures and taps, richly veined marble, and gleaming mirrored surfaces. While Zandberg admits to adding "a heavy dose of bling here," he is right, too, that it "shouts craftsmanship." Indeed, at every turn, this house reveals masterful skills, its lyrical interiors a hymn to artisanal virtuosity. ◻