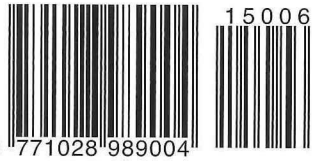


CONDÉ NAST House & Garden

SOUTH AFRICA'S FINEST DECOR MAGAZINE

JUNE 2015 R49,50 (incl.VAT)
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Contrasting geometric textures create the illusion of space OPPOSITE PAGE FROM TOP Designer Hubert Zandberg; the bedroom, where structural elements from the original apartment are still visible



FOREGOING A CLASSIC 18TH-CENTURY SCHEME, THIS PARISIAN PIED-À-TERRE TAKES AN ENLIGHTENED APPROACH TO CHIC LIVING

TEXT PIET SMEDY
PHOTOGRAPHS
NICOLAS MATHÉUS

SMALL WONDER

The City of Lights may look like a grande dame but it behaves like a rock star – and there's no arrondissement in which you'll see this truth shine brighter than Le Marais. Where so many of Paris' famous districts have had their eccentricities trampled by *Lonely Planet*-toting tourists, Le Marais has been left in relative peace, transforming from religious enclave to industrial area to Bohemian quarter. Which brings us to the rue de Tournelles, a cobbled artery in the heart of the district, where you'll find a wonderfully atypical Parisian apartment – even by local standards.

'It's a very tiny space, only about 30 square metres,' says interior designer Hubert Zandberg, who undertook the five-month-





FROM TOP The expanded kitchen, with its large central island, is the heart of the apartment; a collection of floral sketches and insects OPPOSITE PAGE Curious objects sourced from local markets create the impression of an art collection



long redesign of a friend and long-time client's apartment. 'We stripped the whole place down; it was a complete gut job.' The brief was clear: it was a space for out-of-towners and friends and family of the homeowner visiting Paris. 'This really informed our approach to the architecture of the space.'

Hubert's first move was a floor-plan overhaul, reallocating the four-room space into a three-room one. 'We took out the sitting room,' he explains. 'People hang out in the kitchen these days, and so we gave the reclaimed space to the bookcase and the big worktop. In lieu of a reception room we introduced a couch into the bedroom for reclining. It's all slightly unorthodox, but you can get away with it in Le Marais.'

Filling the newly appointed space required trawling the antique stores and local markets that abound in the district. 'The area still has a very industrial feel, and that really informed the feel of the pieces,' says Hubert. 'The vanity cabinet in the bathroom is a 19th-century industrial unit that would have probably been in a hospital. The side handles are glove moulds. In that way, we weren't scared to introduce unexpected elements.'

He also believes that scale plays a hugely transformative part, opting for larger, chunkier pieces such as the kitchen island and the locker in the bedroom. The result is a spatial trompe l'oeil that makes the rooms feel more generous than they actually are.

Hubert and his contractors faced an array of technical challenges, from figuring out how to adhere raffia to the panels used in the kitchen cupboards to fitting chain mail across the radiators. ►





We Sense a Pattern

Experiment with scale and geometrics to transform small spaces

Designer Hubert Zandberg employed various visual techniques — scale, colour and juxtaposition — to create the impression of large spaces in a confined apartment. It might seem counterintuitive, but

opting for chunkier furniture will make the room appear more generous. The same can be said for contrasting colours and geometric elements, which add depth and interest to even the most cramped conditions.



FROM TOP Industrial-style lights, suspended from antique glove moulds, hang above the bathroom cabinet; natural elements are juxtaposed with a brutalist aesthetic
OPPOSITE PAGE The large metal star in the bedroom introduces sculpture and texture

'The details needed to look seamless, even though they were not manufactured. It all became a process of learning.'

'In terms of colouration, we took a very bold approach in black and shades of grey, which could easily overpower the space and the furniture and become quite intimidating.' That's when Hubert decided to introduce a single colour to the scheme: viridian. 'We thought it would be fun to juxtapose those hard colours with a natural softness, which is something you often see in Brazil where they have this prolific brutalist architecture set in a verdant, tropical environment,' explains Hubert. 'There had to be a degree of thought, though. Sometimes the most obvious contrast is the trickiest one to pull off. This works because the one emphasises the other.'

That very same interplay is clear in the choice pieces that fill the apartment: botanical prints, succulent plants in earth-toned pots, an old German school chart of a gorilla skeleton offset by a patchwork kilim, a large metal star ('For some sculpture and an obvious bit of pop art') and cubistic fabrics and wallpaper. 'We wanted to create the illusion of an art collection, but not the typical 18th-century stuff,' says Hubert. 'It's a style popular in São Paulo, which I really like because it adds a sense of exoticism.' And yet the result, a bold, industrialist statement counterbalanced by ubiquitous florals, is right at home in its setting.

'It was an experiment, really,' chuckles Hubert. 'It's not an environment one could live in all the time, I don't think, but in short stays you'll find it a space that's very inspiring.' ■

