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# BLANC SLATE

Serenely chic, *Joseph Dirand's* new apartment is a sumptuously understated oasis in the heart of Paris

TEXT BY DANA THOMAS PHOTOGRAPHY BY ADRIEN DIRAND



ANGEL ALONSO © 2020 ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK

IN THE LIVING ROOM, A PIERRE JEANNERET SOFA AND CHAIRS SURROUND A COCKTAIL TABLE BY JOSEPH DIRAND. ABOVE MANTEL, ART BY ANGEL ALONSO. FOR DETAILS SEE RESOURCES.





A BRECCIA STAZZEMA MARBLE-AND-BRASS CONSOLE BY DIRAND IS TOPPED WITH PIECES BY ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG, GEORGES JOUVÉ, ADRIEN DIRAND, AND ANDRÉ BORDERIE. LAWRENCE CARROLL PAINTING.

ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG © 2020 ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK



A PAINTING BY HAROLD ANCART HANGS IN THE LIVING ROOM. BELOW, RICK OWENS CHAIR; MATHIEU MATÉGOT FLOOR LAMP; IN FOREGROUND, PIERRE JEANNERET BENCH.





A BRECCIA STAZZEMA MARBLE ISLAND ANCHORS THE KITCHEN. PHILIPPE ANTHONIOZ CHANDELIER. OPPOSITE THE BRASS CABINETRY FEATURES AN OLD SILVER PATINA.





# it

was probably inevitable that Joseph Dirand would go into architecture and his brother Adrien would turn to photography. The pair were sons of Jacques Dirand, one of the decor world's preeminent photographers. Throughout their childhood in Paris, they'd hover over the light box, loupe to eye, and gaze at the mesmeric locales their father had captured on 35mm slides. "Venetian

palaces, Palladian villas, artists' houses, masters' ateliers, cabinets of curiosity, princesses' boudoirs, Tuscan castles, Napoleonic apartments, fishermen's huts," Adrien, who took the pictures for this story, wrote in *Joseph Dirand: Interior*, published by Rizzoli several years ago. "We would relive these trips with few words, passion, and a hint of mischief."

That's also an apt way to describe Dirand's work. He sees his approach as "ornamental minimalism," he explained on a winter Friday night at his new home on the Right Bank. "I create space with equilibrium and a classic base." Yet "there are details and compositions," he continued, like mixing marble powder into cement to give it a glistening silkiness, or painting mirrored closet doors with foggy, Turner-esque murals, or scorching silver-clad kitchen cabinets to evoke the smoky allure of a Belle Époque bordello. This would be the mischief.

Dirand, his wife, Anso, an events planner, and their two daughters (each from their previous marriages) lived for six years on the Left Bank. But with a baby on the way, they needed to upsize. They searched without much luck—even in Paris, "a noble building is hard to find," he noted. Then their landlord mentioned a flat available in a building constructed on the Passy hill as a hotel for the Exposition Universelle of 1900.

As soon as Dirand laid eyes on the 2,600-square-foot space, with its picture-postcard view of Paris, he knew he'd found what he'd been looking for, and how he would make it his. "I've spent my career putting together settings for others, but rarely do I get to do it for myself," he said. "So I was very precise about what I wanted. Design for me must always serve its function—a space well studied delivering a certain quality of life."

Clearly, stone is Dirand's preferred material. Walls, flat surfaces, baths are all in soft-tone stone or marble—often cut from massive blocks he purchased years ago and stored, "waiting for the right moment." As with all his commissions—which currently include a ground-up resort on Norman's Cay in the Bahamas and interiors for the new Rosewood hotel on London's Grosvenor Square, as well as design-world favorites like Paris's Loulou and Monsieur Bleu (where he met Anso, a former manager there), The Surf Club in Miami, and LeJardinier and Shun in New York—he brought on his favorite artisans, who know how to execute his "taste for details," as he put it.

Like the three majestic Massangis limestone-trimmed arches down the left side of the entrance hall, which give way to the sprawling living/dining room. Arches for Dirand "are more a vocabulary for a house than an apartment," he said. Here they create the air of "a mini-palazzo," with edges that were hand-rounded by masons "to capture the light, and to create a continuous line, like a ribbon that carries on."

In the kitchen, his teenage daughter Ninon was doing her homework at a vanilla-hued island carved from a hunk of breccia stazzema marble he purchased directly from the quarry and saved for five years. "I love the thick width of the base and how the veins run down it," he said. "You see the mass." The WC is walled with breccia verde marble he picked up in Italy. "This material is like a landscape," he said, surveying it. The master bath is enrobed with paonazzo marble "from the mountains above Carrara." He even employs mineral materials for key furnishings, such as the white travertine dining table and the estremoz coffee table.

Through a neoclassical limestone pedimented doorway at the end of the entrance hall—"very 17th-century Italian," he pointed out—is the family's private quarters. In the narrow hallway prowls a sleek bronze-and-gold lioness with auric eyes—a sculpture by Harumi Klossowska de Rola, the daughter of Balthus. Throughout the home, creatures abound—an adorable Lalanne lamb, a vintage scarab table by French mid-century ceramist Georges Jouve, a taxidermy owl from the Paris natural science shop Deyrolle. More mischief.

The overall palette is "natural tints," Dirand said, motioning toward the tobacco-hued Versailles parquet and walls and furniture in off-whites, pale greens, and the lightest of grays—a neutral canvas devised to set off his extensive modern, abstract, and Arte Povera art collection. He walked to the salon's bookcase and pulled open a hidden compartment: a turntable deck. "My wife DJs," he said with a laugh. She also does the cooking for their frequent dinner parties. On the menu for that evening: watercress soup, osso buco, and risotto Milanese, for 12. "I work in fantasy and construct a framework for living," he said. "And she makes it live." ▲

"I create space with equilibrium, and a classic base," says *Dirand*.



JANNIS KOUNELLIS © 2020 ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK

ALABASTER PENDANTS BY DIRAND LINE THE ENTRANCE HALL. T. H. ROBSJOHN-GIBBINGS SOFA; FOLKE BENSOW LOW TABLE; JANNIS KOUNELLIS PAINTING; HARUMI KLOSSOWSKA DE ROLA BRONZE-AND-GOLD LIONESS SCULPTURE.





CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE DIRAND AND ANSO IN THE KITCHEN. CUSTOM BANQUETTE BY DIRAND; ERIC SCHMITT PENDANT; ETTORE SOTTASS TABLE. MIRRORED AND PAINTED PANELS LINE A HALLWAY. IN THE MASTER BEDROOM, A PARCHMENT-AND-MARBLE TABLE FLANKS THE BED, BOTH BY DIRAND. ABOVE BED, LEIKO IKEMURA PAINTING.



“I’ve spent my career putting together settings for others, but rarely do I get to do it for myself.”

LEIKO IKEMURA © 2020 ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK; HAIR AND MAKEUP BY ISABELLE KRYLA FOR AIRPORT AGENCY



PAONAZZO MARBLE CLADS THE BATH. ERIC SCHMITT BRONZE-AND-FABRIC POUF; WATERWORKS SINK AND TUB FITTINGS.





“I was very precise about what I wanted.  
Design for me must always serve its function.”

A LAMB SCULPTURE BY FRANÇOIS-XAVIER LALANNE STANDS WATCH IN THE MASTER BEDROOM.  
OSCAR NIEMEYER CHAIR; GEORGES JOUVE COCKTAIL TABLE; CHARLOTTE PERRIAND CONSOLE.