

THE PARIS APARTMENT OF ZADIG & VOLTAIRE'S
THIERRY GILLIER AND CECILIA BÖNSTRÖM
EXPRESSES THE EFFORTLESS STYLE
AND VITALITY OF THEIR FASHION BRAND.

PHOTOGRAPHY FRANÇOIS HALARD

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LINES



The large skylight illuminates the staircase linking the two floors of the apartment. On the landing is John Chamberlain's *EMPIREMICROPHONE*, 2009 with Georg Baselitz's *Im Sommer*, 2017 above the stairs. *Opposite*: Christopher Wool *Untitled (P531)*, 2006.

THE ARTWORKS in the Parisian apartment of Thierry Gillier and Cecilia Bönström change with great regularity. “About every six months, several strapping guys arrive wearing white gloves, exchange the paintings and fill in the holes on the walls,” recounts Bönström. Those currently on display include works by serious blue-chip names: Christopher Wool, Georg Baselitz, Günther Förg, Cy Twombly, Rudolf Stingel ... and even an oil painting of a woman’s head by Picasso. The couple and their four children live with such treasures in an extremely relaxed fashion. As Bönström says, “This is a home, not a museum.”

Remarkably, there have never been any breaks or accidents. Dressed in a navy crew neck and jeans, Bönström recalls how their youngest son, Emil, once decided to get artistic himself. Aged two-and-a-half, he took a felt pen to the hallway walls of their former flat. They came back to discover he’d drawn an almost continuous line around the space. There was only one spot where he’d stopped: in front of a Richard Prince painting. “You could see by the mark beside it that he’d hesitated for a while,” she says. “Even at that age, he had the notion of the value of an artwork.”

Gillier is the founder of the fashion house Zadig & Voltaire, which opened its first boutique in Paris in 1997 and now counts 330 sales outlets in some 30 countries. The candid and energetic Bönström

is the brand’s Swedish artistic director. She was born in 1970 in Gothenburg and brought up in what she describes as “an idyllic setting”. “I would have liked everyone to have had the same childhood as me,” she says. Located directly on the sea, the family home was decorated with sleek modernist sideboards and leather chairs.

She moved to Paris at the age of 18 to pursue a modelling career, initially in tandem with her twin sister, Charlotte. They shared their very first apartment in the French capital with a certain Naomi Campbell. Highlights of Bönström’s 15-year career included advertising campaigns for Hermès and Clarins, and editorial shoots with photographers such as Michel Comte and Oliviero Toscani. Without any formal training, she was hired to work at Zadig & Voltaire in 2003 and appointed to her present position three years later. She and Gillier married in 2016.

She readily admits they have distinct but complementary characters. “The difference between us is that I’m satisfied, whereas he never is. As soon as Thierry finishes a project, he’s already looking for something new.” And that applies to their living arrangements too. Their previous apartment near the Parc Monceau was a bachelor pad with elaborate ceilings and a baroque fireplace in the sitting room, initially designed for the 19th-century town planner, Baron Haussmann. For Bönström, these were “the best years of my life”.

So, when Gillier told her that he’d come across a 700-square-metre duplex near the Place des États-Unis in the 16th arrondissement, she was initially reluctant to move on. “He said, ‘I’ve not signed anything yet. The final decision is yours,’” she recalls. “The real estate dealers told me, ‘You’ll see it’s magnificent!’ And I replied, ‘I already live somewhere fabulous.’” She was also reticent about the district. “For me, it was too calm.” Nevertheless, she agreed to visit and, contrary to her expectations, was immediately seduced. The big draw was the drop-dead view of the Eiffel Tower. She also realised it was just a five-minute walk from her office.

Situated on the top two floors of the building, it originally looked very different; the top level consisted of a series of maids’ rooms and another small apartment with a tiny balcony that was enlarged to create a proper terrace. The couple chose to work on the project with the Belgian interior designer, Bernard Dubois. “We really fell for his extremely radical approach,” explains Bönström. “His pure lines were a good match for our aesthetic. We wanted to fill the space with art and light, rather than decorate it per se.”

Together, they chose to transform the top storey into a largely open loft-like space, devoted to the living room, a dining area, kitchen and home cinema, although Bönström rarely uses the latter. “I would have preferred it to be a meditation space,” she admits. The pared-

down decor has white walls, exposed ceiling beams and floors made from a bluish-grey Italian stone called ceppo di gré. The bedrooms on the floor below have been given a more classical look, with carpeted or walnut parquet flooring and mouldings inspired by 17th-century French interiors.

Almost all the furnishings were acquired by Gillier. They include a plethora of Pierre Jeanneret chairs, a Charlotte Perriand bookshelf, dozens of African fertility masks and a stuffed beaver and porcupine. “He has buying bulimia,” quips his wife. “He never stops. He has such a passion for acquiring things that I just step back and let him take the initiative. It’s so stimulating to live with a man who has so much energy and I get my satisfaction from designing my fashion collections. At home, as long as I have my Liaigre lamps and my teacups from Kyoto, and I can choose the navy and khaki velvet for the sofas, I’m more than happy.” Another object she insisted on integrating into the interior was the red-legged Jean Prouvé chair in her bathroom.

And despite her hesitation about moving, it would seem she’s more than happy with her change of address. “I’m high up, with a view of the Eiffel Tower and can easily walk to the Champs-Élysées,” she says. “The flat feels so serene and protective. It’s like we live in a bubble cut off from the rest of the world.”



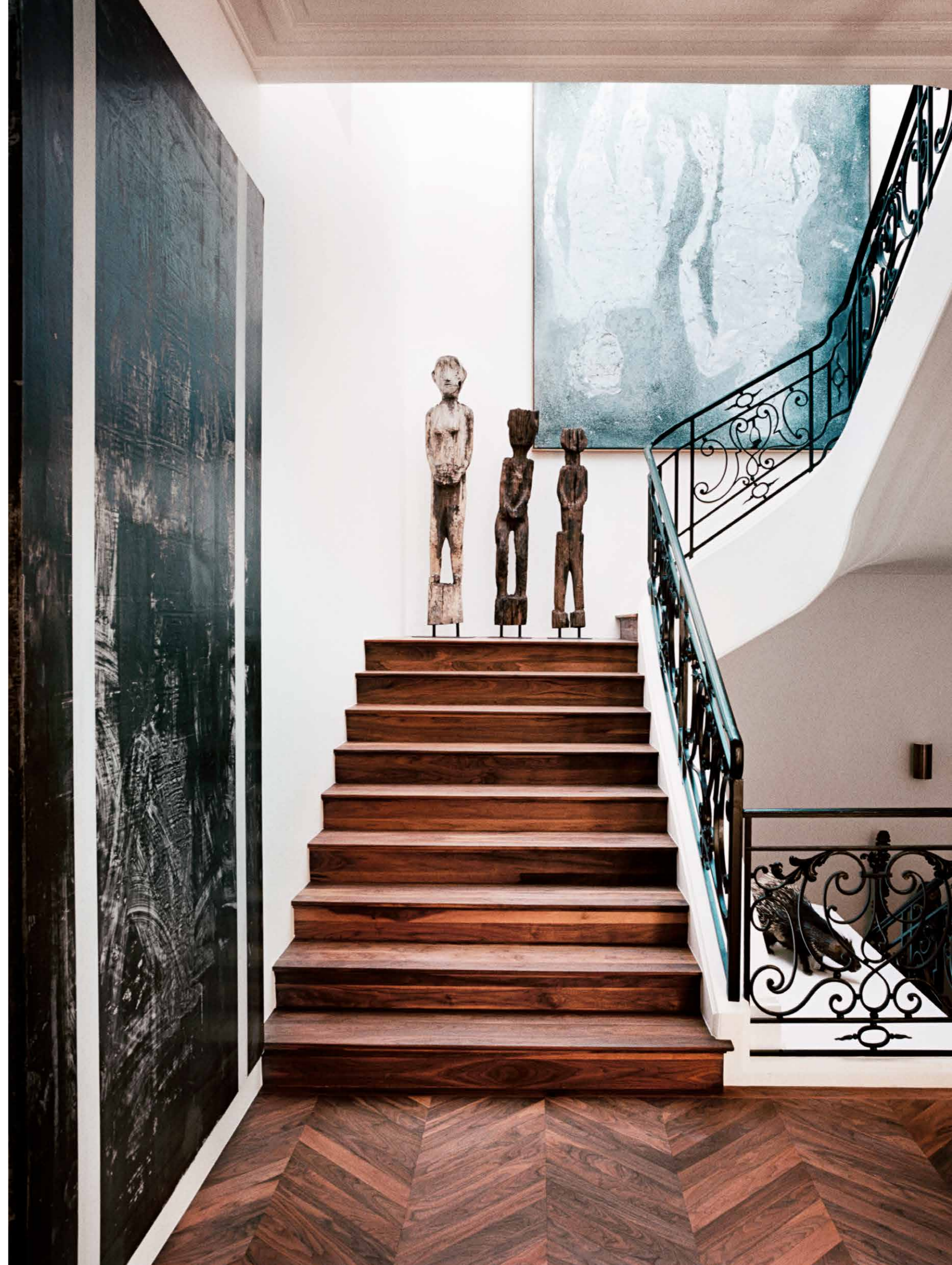
Cecilia Bönström is sitting on a bench bought at the Saint-Ouen flea market by her husband Thierry Gillier. On the wall behind is Christopher Wool’s *Untitled (P531)*, 2006.

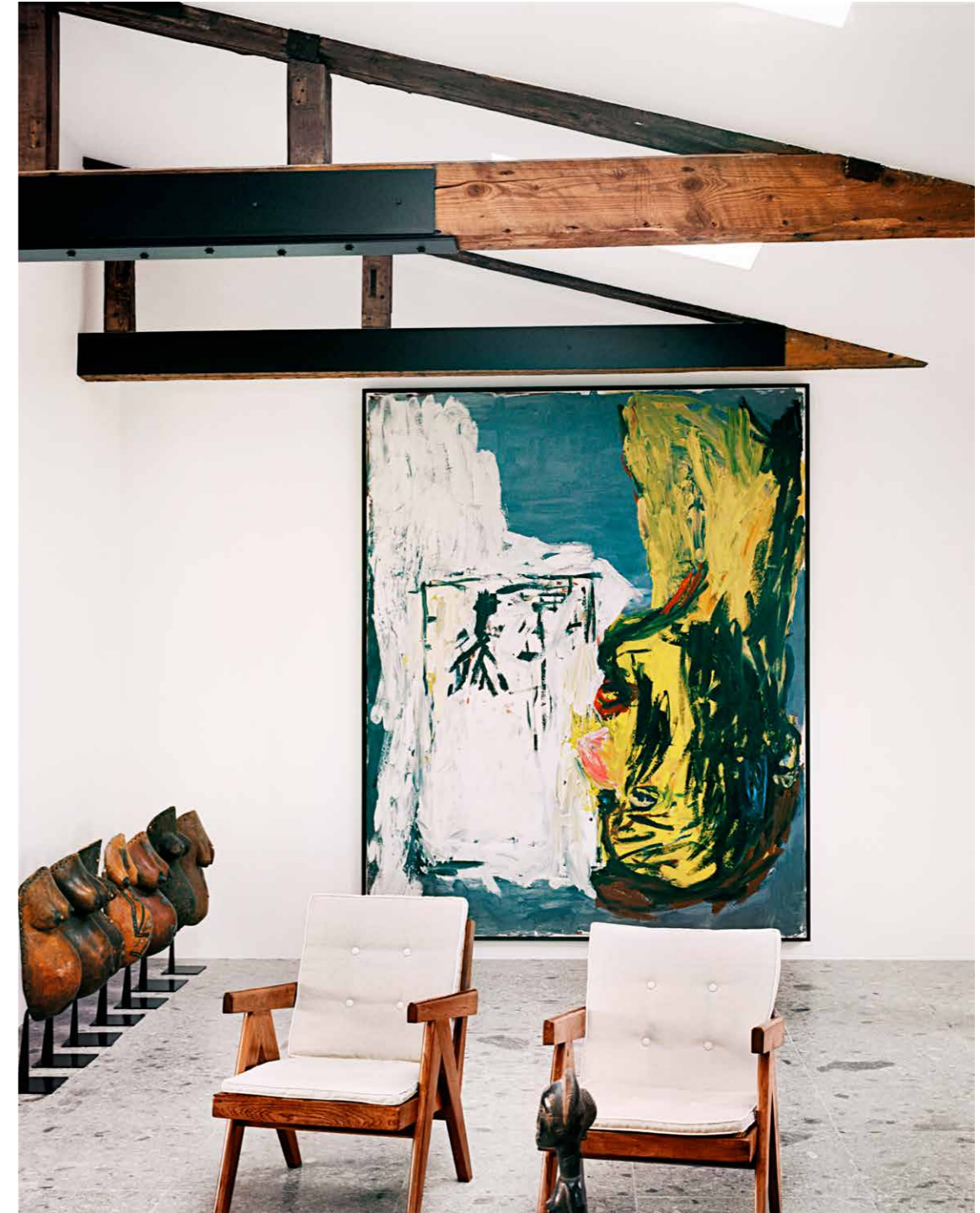


Franz West’s *Innocent (After Cy Twombly)*, 2011.

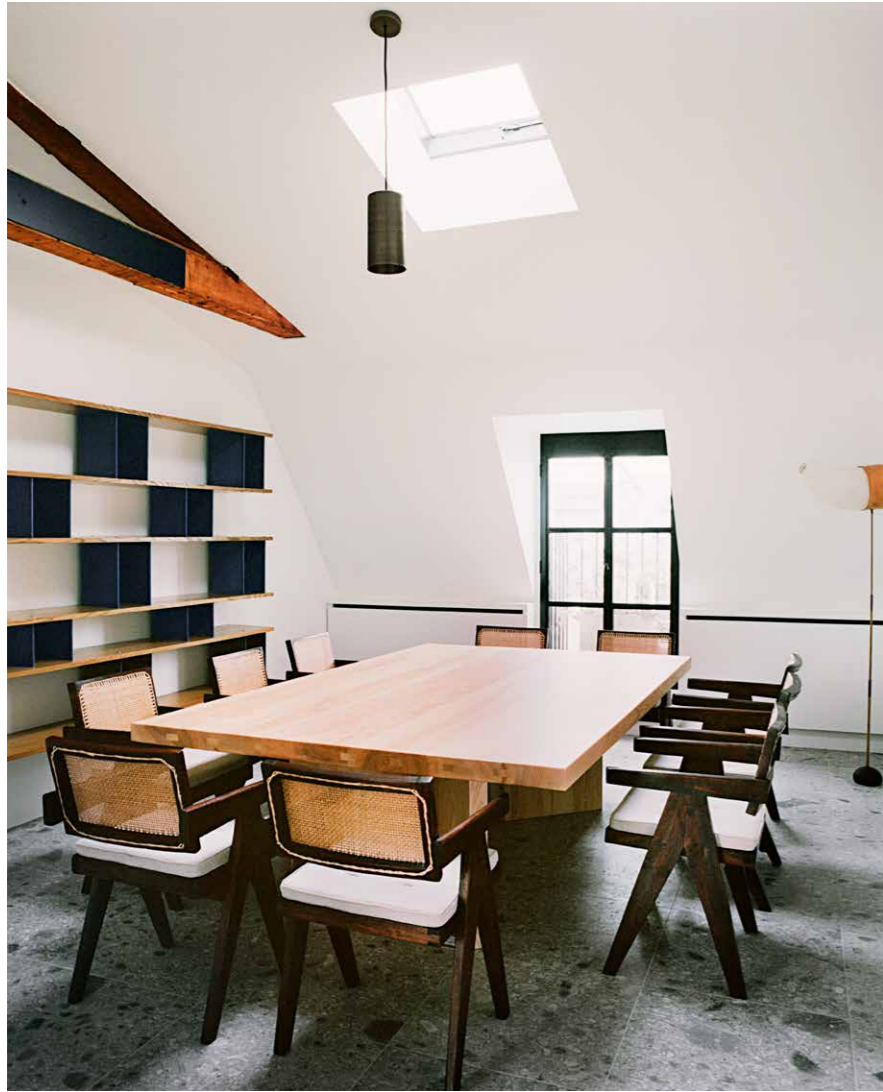


In the open living area is Steven Parrino's *Death in America #2*, 2003 with two Pierre Jeanneret armchairs. *Opposite:* Indonesian sculptures stand to attention on the stairs with Günther Förg's *Ohne Titel*, 1990 at the bottom.

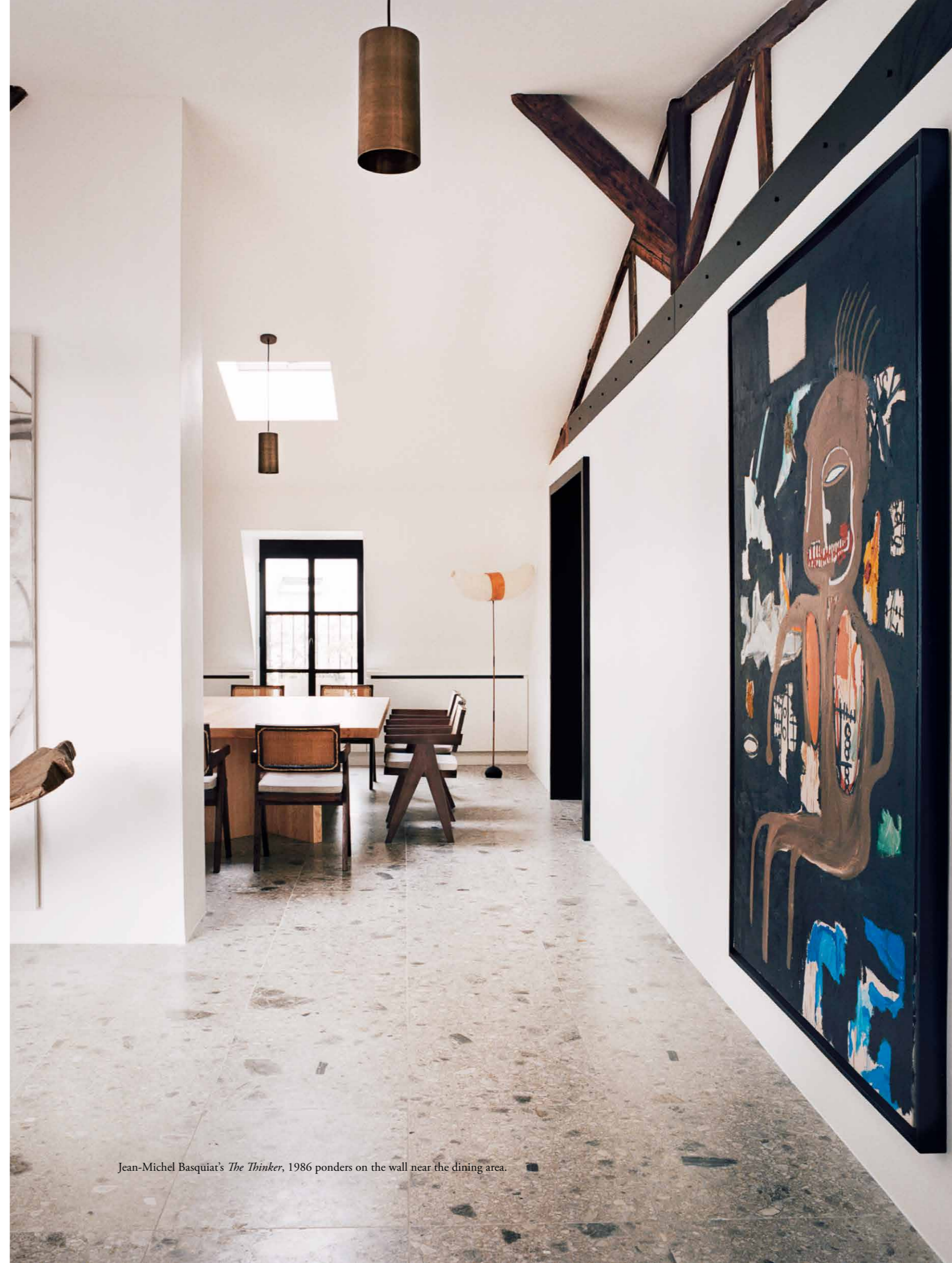




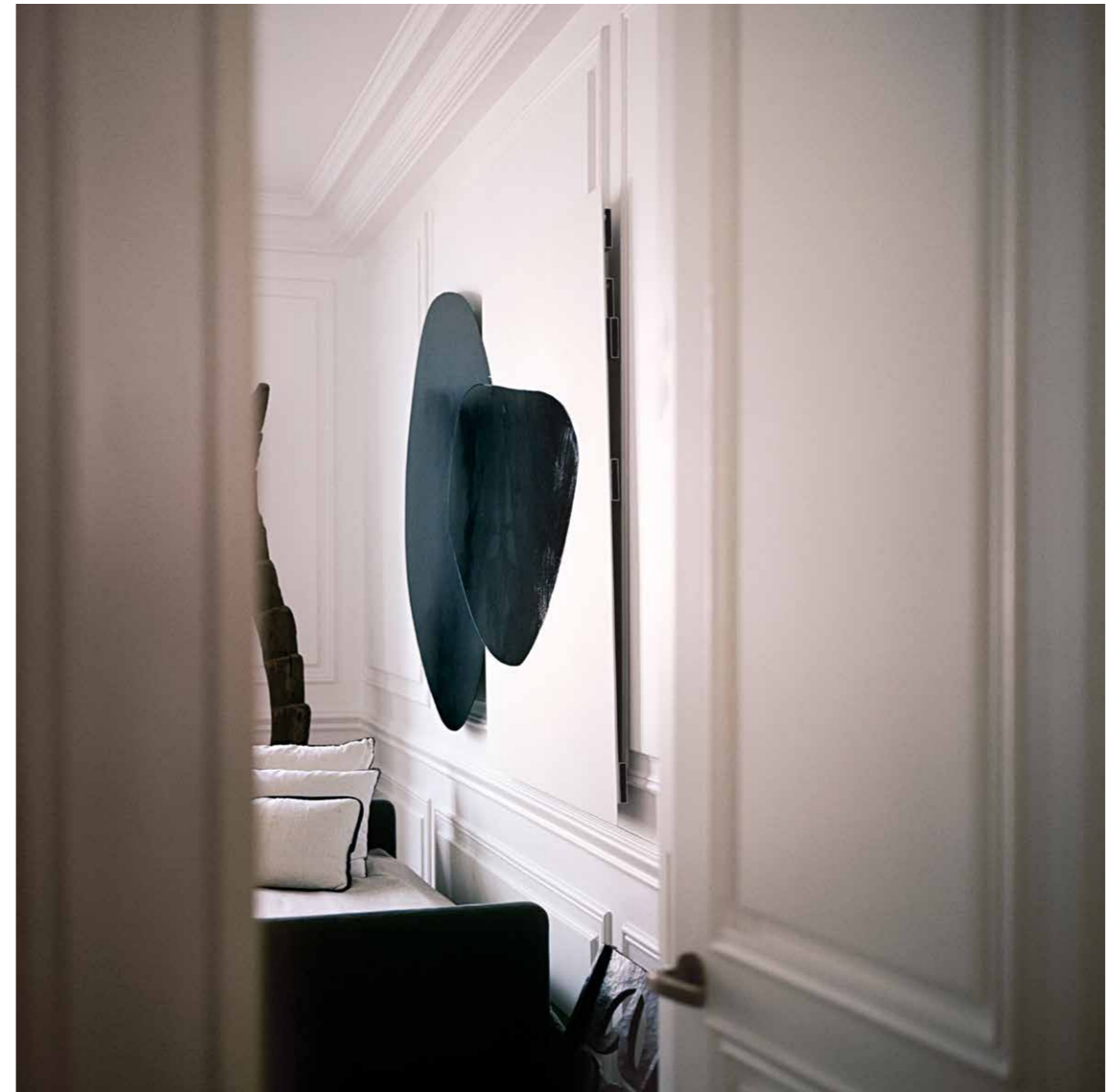
African fertility sculptures are lined up along a wall near Georg Baselitz's *Kopf in der Sonne*, 1982 and two Pierre Jeanneret chairs. *Opposite:* The top storey was opened into a loft-like living space. Cy Twombly's *Venere Franchetti*, 1963 hangs above a collection of 20th century carved wood figures and a mask, and fertility sculptures from Africa. The sofa is by Christian Liaigre, colour carefully chosen by Cecilia Bönström.



A Charlotte Perriand bookcase hangs on the wall of the dining area. The custom dining table is designed by Thierry Gillier and architect Bernard Dubois. Jean-Michel Sanejouand's *Toile blanche et bande de plastique noire*, 1963.



Jean-Michel Basquiat's *The Thinker*, 1986 ponders on the wall near the dining area.



Imi Knoebel's *Bild 09.10.2015*, 2015. *Opposite:* The bedroom on the lower floor has a more classical look, with mouldings inspired by 17th-century French interiors. Imi Knoebel's vibrant acrylic on aluminium *Tinderflame*, 2017 dominates a wall.