

Teapot and cups by **PETER SHIRE**,
on kitchen marble credenza

Beyond the white cube

A conversation between the architect Charles-Edmond Henry, founder of Studio Henry, Anne Dressen, curator at the Modern Art Museum of Paris, and Niklas Svennung, director of Galerie Chantal Crousel, on their renovated Parisian apartment and contemporary art.

Interior design Studio Henry
Photography Kira Bunse
Special thanks **DESSELLE PARTNERS**



View of the living room: Left: Drawing by **FRANCIS PICABIA**
Center: Mantelpiece covered with tiles by **MIMOSA ECHARD**
Top right: Drawing by **JEAN-LUC MOULÈNE**
Bottom: Felt-tip drawing/poem by **KARL HOLMQVIST**
Chandelier by **CARLO SCARPA**



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Niklas Svennung: When we were looking for an architect to renovate our new apartment in Paris, we thought of your projects, Charles-Edmond, which we really liked. We had already met through mutual friends, including your partner Katia, and our artist friends Antek Walczak and Bernadette Corporation, and on various occasions at the gallery and other events.

Charles-Edmond Henry: Yes, although I usually don't work for family members or friends because a project is an adventure, a journey, and there can be extravagant or painful. But with you, I was confident and everything went smoothly.

Anne Drossen: You warned us very early on, Charles-Edmond, that renovations are a test for every couple and it's better to know that before embarking on the adventure!

NS: Yes, it's very good advice to preserve the cohesion of the couple and our friendship, especially since we operate in the same circle and we might cross paths again. It helped us navigate the construction of this project, our inner questions and doubts.

AD: Plus, we agree on the fundamentals and our aesthetic tastes.

NS: In your project, we appreciate the treatment of spaces, the choice of materials, and the highlighting of textures.

CEH: Through this project, I was also able to immerse myself in the art and cultural world, and appreciate our common project even more. Our exchanges were very enriching, especially around the "Flamme" exhibition on ceramics that you organized, Anne. I particularly remember our captivating conversations.

AD: You were attentive to our desires, without a desire to impose an identifiable style, and we were able to work on different ideas to find all the solutions in a very fluid way.

CEH: The apartment played a major role because it is unique with a beautiful cross-shaped plan and expansive views due to a ceiling height of over 4 meters. I was inspired to work on a project with such a high-quality space.

NS: You also mentioned that you primarily design spaces for retail.

CEH: Indeed, this type of project requires a great investment, from the studies to the execution. But the space already had potential, so we simply had to adapt it to a family with children and a beautiful art collection.

NS: The apartment is located in a *hôtel particulier* that is quite characteristic of a certain era. We wanted to preserve the charm, including the large kitchen that has a somewhat countryside feel.

AD: What we mainly removed in this apartment were the ubiquitous moldings. It was impossible to hang anything on the walls, except for postcards. It was so crowded that it obscured the spaces, including the living room.

CEH: We restored the space's qualities by bringing back light and volume. Then we redid all the floors, installing underfloor heating throughout the apartment, which gives a contemporary and refined look to the whole space.

AD: This allowed us to highlight the centerpiece of the living room: the fireplace covered in tiles by Mimosa Echard. She had designed these tiles as part of a project carried out in Switzerland for a maternity ward. Charles-Edmond, you dismantle the old fireplace and we collaborated with the artist to determine the arrangement of colors.

NS: It's a unique object with its vibrant colors, atypical for a fireplace. Mimosa Echard took inspiration from nature, using twigs and seeds that she enlarged to create these tiles. It's a strong focal point in the living room.

CEH: The idea was also to scatter small artworks throughout the apartment, thanks to the collaboration with two artists to create custom-made tiles for the bathroom of the children. There are nearly a hundred scattered painted tiles.

NS: The children also participated in the creation of these artworks. They went to the workshop of Sylvie Aury, their godmother, who had a great time with the children in her pottery studio.

AD: Natsuko Uchino also collaborated closely. The creations were randomly arranged during our absence in July. We discovered the artworks with joy upon our return.

CEH: In resonance with these ceramics tiles, there are the marbles you chose for the kitchen countertop.

AD: Yes, we were fortunate to visit the quarries in northern Italy. The beauty of the stones made the choice difficult. We then thought of a piece by the Flemish designer Müller & Van Severen that inspired us as a backdrop. So we selected seven marbles, including four for the kitchen countertops, and a single magnificent one for the bathroom.



Marbles assemblage for the kitchen credenza;
And Shakira on top of the cupboards designed by Charles-Edmond



Anne, Niklas and Charles-Edmond, in the living room; painting by **MATTHEW LANGAN PECK**; sofa by **PATRICIA URQUIOLA**, table by **FRISO KRAMER**, meditation stool, early 19th-century Swedish stool, Berber rug, lamp by **ACHILLE CASTIGLIONE**; Behind: book shelves by **DIETER RAMS**



Lithograph by **CAROL RAMA** against a wallpaper by **MARC CAMILLE CHAIMOWICZ**

Painting by **JUTTA KOETHER**



View from the living room towards the office room, with wallpaper by **MARC CAMILLE CHAIMOWICZ**, pastel by **GUIDETTE CARBONELL** (behind the door); in front : Chair by **CHARLES & RAY EAMES** and flowerpot by **DE BEAULIEU**



SYLVIE AUVRAY and **NATSUKO UCHINO**'s collaboration (with Lee and Kim) for the tiles of the children's bathroom.



Silkscreen by **DAVID DOUARD**

Kitchen view: table and chairs by **FRISO KRAMER**, **HENRI CALMAN** shelving unit from the 1950', ceiling light by **ACHILLE CASTIGLIONE**

Various utilitarian ceramics (American, Scandinavian, Italian, French and Japanese), both anonymous and signed, including pieces by **NATSUKO UCHINO**, **PETER SHIRE**, **JB BLUNK**, **SHARIF FARRAG**, **MATTHEW LUTZ-KINOY**, **MAGDALENA SUAREZ-FRIMKES**, **JEAN-JACQUES DUBERNARD**, **HERVÉ ROUSSEAU**, **RITKRIT TIRAVANJA**, **STIG LINDBERG** and **WILHELM KÄGE**... on **HENRI CALMAN**' shelf from the 1950's.



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CEH: There is also a chromatic coherence with the ceramics on the shelves in the kitchen.

AD: Yes, it's like a patchwork of utilitarian artworks that we use every day. We have a strong presence of Japanese and Swedish ceramicists, including Natsuko Ushino. And Peter Shire as well.

CEH: And the artworks are also deployed in a coherent manner throughout the apartment.

NS: Yes, we made a small selection of art because we want the apartment to develop its identity through its spatial relation and architecture, rather than saturating it with images. We both live with a lot of images on a daily basis at the gallery and through exhibitions. There are a few artworks that we chose here, not necessarily related to the artists represented at the gallery. Except in the entrance, where there is a work by David Douard depicting teenage girls putting on makeup to make themselves beautiful before going out. There's a connection to the hallway, quite amusing. There are also two artworks by Julien Ceccaldi, a Franco-Canadian artist, one of which, quite humorous, portrays characters very perceptive of their appearance. And there's also a small drawing by Picabia that I love. It's from a different era, a different style, very Parisian in its identity, almost Dadaist and humorous.

AD: There's this poet artist we really like, Carlo (last name), and his textual painting. There's also a colorful pastel by Guidette Carbonell, an artist from the 1950s who did a lot of tapestries.

CEH: Anne, are you planning for an upcoming exhibition?

AD: I'm currently working on a PhD that aims to systematically cross fine arts, decorative arts, and popular arts, and also to work on several storage spaces and collections to rethink the display in a museum of plural arts. For now, it's a prefiguration of a museum to come.

CEH: Are you looking at existing architectural examples for this museum?

AD: There will be a reflection on scenography, on alternatives to the white cube, and on the importance given to domestic dimensions. I'm interested in the techniques used to shape objects and the question of usage. So, I want to question the principle of the autonomy of the artwork that has been separated from life and everydayness in order to reintegrate it.

CEH: Do you envision architectural spaces for your project?

AD: I would like to exhibit the same type of objects in different ways to show how our perception is conditioned by scenographic choices. The same type of objects, whether shown on a pedestal or in a showcase, take on different meanings. The goal is to present different scenarios with objects that tell different stories, shaping the conditioning of our perception and what we make objects say.

NS: Regarding their artistic hierarchy, social hierarchy, and hierarchy of value.

CEH: It's interesting because we also find this kind of strategy in retail. There is a hierarchy of products, between those that are highlighted and those that are placed in the background because they are the most attractive. These are strategies for enhancing objects.

NS: The same applies to magazines, exhibitions, and galleries. The importance we perceive in an object is conditioned by the way it has been strategically positioned. Each person should question the perception they cast and ask themselves whether it has been arranged or if they perceive the object for what it truly is.

CEH: Yes, staging is important. And at the gallery, do you try to be as neutral as possible in your space?

NS: Yes, we try to be neutral in the white cube. But artists always try to find a way to study perception, to keep the focus on how the perception functions.

AD: There is nothing less neutral than the white cube. In fact, artist Wade Guyton pointed that out by removing walls and leaving raw elements of the gallery.

NS: Wade Guyton revealed two old windows that had always been hidden in the space. He had us remove two sections of plaster walls and left the two old windows visible, while keeping the dusty elements and old visible electrical cables. It's like a reminder of what the white cube is and the history of a place. When rethinking this apartment, we made contemporary elements coexist with qualitative historical elements. That's where we found common ground with you, Charles-Edmond. The introduction of traditional, historical, and contemporary materials like marble and ceramics coexist with a preserved and respected identity.

CEH: Yes, in the same process, we revealed the refined space of this Parisian apartment by removing all unnecessary additions.

Painting by MATTHEW LANGAN PECK



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